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COMMENTARY

ON

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

VOL. I.

THE CALVIN TRANSLATION SOCIETY,

INSTITUTED IN MAY M.DCCC.XLIII.

FOR THE PUBLICATION OF TRANSLATIONS OF THE WORKS OF JOHN CALVIN.

2211-2

COMMENTARY

UPON

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

BY JOHN CALVIN.

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF
CHRISTOPHER FETHERSTONE, STUDENT IN DIVINITY,

BY HENRY BEVERIDGE, ESQ.

VOLUME FIRST.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR THE CALVIN TRANSLATION SOCIETY.
M.DCCC.XLIV.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE present COMMENTARY, necessarily partaking of the character of the Book which it is designed to illustrate, is more historical than doctrinal; and hence does not contain so much profound theological discussion as some of Calvin's other Commentaries. The leading topic is the progress of the Gospel under the inspired teachers to whom its first propagation was entrusted, and, in immediate connection with this, the Constitution of the Apostolic Church, and the privileges enjoyed by its members. To this latter point the attention of the religious world is now more especially directed; and whatever be the views entertained with regard to it by any reader into whose hands this Commentary may fall, if he feels aright, he will not think that his study of the controversy is complete until he has made himself acquainted with what has been said upon it by such a man as Calvin.

A work of talent need not be either the less interesting or the less instructive that it advocates views at variance with our own. If our opinions have been deliberately and candidly formed, it is a satisfactory test of their soundness when they continue unshaken by all that the ablest opponent can urge against them.

The Translation appears to be well executed. It is, perhaps, not so strictly literal as that of the Commentary on the Romans, which the CALVIN SOCIETY has already published; but any difference, in this respect, is more than compensated by the general superiority of its style. There are occasional obscurities or mistranslations which the Editor has endeavoured, as in the Commentary on the Romans, to remove by foot-notes; but, on the whole, it is believed that the present Translation will not suffer by comparison with that of any Theological Translation of the same period.

H. B.

THE COMMENTARIES

of M. IOHN CALVIN

vpon the Actes of the Apoſtles,

Faithfully tranſlated out of Latine into Engliſh for the great profite of our countrie-men,

By Chriſtopher Fetherſtone *ſtudent in Diuinitie.*

LONDINI,
Impenſis G. Biſhop.

1585.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD HENRY, EARL OF HUNTINGTON,

LORD HASTINGS, ETC., KNIGHT OF THE MOST HONOURABLE ORDER OF THE GARTER, AND LORD PRESIDENT OF THE QUEEN'S MAJESTY'S COUNSEL ESTABLISHED IN THE NORTH PARTS,

CHRISTOPHER FETHERSTONE

WISHETH INCREASE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS, LONG LIFE, AND HAPPY DAYS.

If that (Right Honourable) I should prefix any long and tedious preface before this work in commendation of your honour,—I should of some be suspected of flattery; if in praise of these learned Commentaries,—it should seem a thing superfluous, seeing they sufficiently commend themselves; if in excuse of those faults which are by me in translating hereof committed,—some censuring Cato would condemn me, because I would take in hand a work so weighty, being not able to be without fault, and by craving pardon for faults laying open my folly. Omitting, therefore, those things which might carry with them such inconveniences, I hasten unto that whereof I am chiefly to speak; namely, to lay open the causes moving me to dedicate this my simple translation unto your honour.

Your deserts of God's church, your singular zeal, your unfeigned faith, your sincere profession, your especial care to advance God's glory, and to root out Papistry, your faithfulness towards your prince, have been such, that this realm generally, but my countrymen in the north parts, my native soil, specially, have, and shall have, great cause to praise God for you in the day of their visitation, even when it shall

please God of his great mercy to behold them with favourable countenance, and to take from them in greater measure that blindness and superstition, wherein they had been long time nousled, and being fast bred by the bone, is not yet (through want of means) gotten out of the flesh. Seeing all these virtues are in you to be found; seeing both this church and country have found you so beneficial, whom ought not these things to provoke to show all thankfulness towards your honour?

Again, when this history of the Acts of the Apostles was first penned in Greek by Luke, it was dedicated to noble Theophilus. When M. Calvin did the second time publish his Commentaries thereupon in Latin, he presented them unto one who was in mind a noble Theophilus. Lest, therefore, this work, now published in English, should by dedication be any whit debased, I have made choice of your honour, being no less a noble Theophilus than those before mentioned.

Another thing, which is not so much a cause as an encouragement, is that courtesy which your honour showeth to those which present unto you any exercises of learning, how simple soever they be, whereof I have had full good experience even in my tender years; namely, at such time as I was trained up in the city of Carlisle, under that man, in his calling painful, and to the commonwealth profitable, M. Hayes, whom for that duty which to him I owe I name. At which time, though those exercises which unto your honour we then presented were simple, yet were they so courteously of you received, that the remembrance thereof doth even now encourage me to presume to offer unto you some weightier matter.

The last, but not the least, is, the consideration of that great and undeserved kindness, which all my friends in general, but especially my brother, your honour's servant, have found at your hands, which, to rip up at large, would be too tedious. In their behalf, therefore, Right Honourable, as also in mine own, as a small testimony of a thankful heart, I present unto your honour this work; simple, if

you respect the translation, but most excellent, if you consider the matter. And thus, humbly craving pardon for my boldness, and much more humbly beseeching the Lord to bless you in the reading hereof, I conclude, fearing prolixity. The Lord of heaven bless you, and grant that as you have been heretofore a good Theophilus, so you may continue to the glory of God, the increasing of his Church, and the profit of this commonwealth.

From Maighfield in Sussex, this 12th of October, 1585.

Your Honour's most humble and obedient,

and in Christ at commandment,

CHRISTOPHER FETHERSTONE.

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

THOU hast at length, (Christian reader,) through the blessing of God, wherewith he hath blessed my labours, those learned Commentaries of M. Calvin upon the Acts of the Apostles, though simply, yet faithfully, turned into English; and though of many I was the unmeetest to attempt this travail, yet such was the earnest request of my godly friends, that unless I should have taken it in hand, I should have seemed void of courtesy, and also of care to profit God's Church. I will not stand to rip up those commodities which thou by reading these Commentaries mayest reap, but I leave them to thine own experience. What my travail hath been in this work, those who have endured like toil can best judge. And forasmuch as I know well, that after great painstaking some things have escaped me, I beseech thee, (gentle reader,) condemn me not rashly, but rather amend them friendly. If thou shalt grow forward in knowledge by reading this work, then praise God, who hath by this means made thee profit. God give thee good success in reading, that thereby thou mayest both be better learned, and also better lived.

Thine in the Lord,

CHRISTOPHER FETHERSTONE.

TO THE MOST RENOWNED PRINCE,

THE LORD NICOLAS RADZIWILL, DUKE IN OLIKA,

COUNTY PALATINE OF VILNA, CHIEF MARSHAL, AND HEAD CHANCELLOR OF THE GREAT DUKEDOM OF LITHUANIA, ETC.,

HIS LORD HIGHLY TO BE REVERENCED,

JOHN CALVIN.

WHEREAS I have made mention of the names of those kings unto whom I had dedicated these my Commentaries, lest the change incur the crime of lightness among certain unskilful men, I must briefly render some reason thereof. For although both the remembrance of the father, who is dead, doth retain that reverence with me which it deserveth, and I do also, as becometh me, reverence the son; yet the importunities of certain did enforce me to put out[1] their names in this second edition, who, being incensed against me with a furious hatred and fear, lest the majesty of kings do purchase some favour to my writings, do boast abroad that they did conceive sore displeasure, that their name was mixed with the doctrine of the sacraments which they themselves disallow. I leave it indifferent whether that be true or no, neither do I pass;[2] forasmuch as I did neither hunt after any private gain, nor yet seek to win favour. But because it seemed to me an indecent and filthy thing to enforce those books upon men which are unwilling to entertain them, which do find willing readers enough, it was worth the declaring now, that I never did think any thing less; but that

[1] "Expungere," to expunge.

[2] "Neque vero mea interest," indeed, I have no interest in it.

I did hope for more courtesy than I found. In that truly there can be no offence, if withdrawing myself from the contempt of those who loathe my dutifulness, I suffer them to enjoy those delights of theirs which they desire, and wherein they delight.

Of you, most famous prince, have I made choice, not without good cause, whom I might put in the place of two; both because I think you most worthy to have your name appear in the spiritual building of Christ's temple; neither do I fear but that my book shall find the same friendship at your hands, which you did vouchsafe to declare towards me in your most gentle letters. But, omitting at this time the respect of private good-will, I will stay in another thing. Moreover, I may full well apply unto you that speech which I had before with another. Neither am I determined in this place to commend those most excellent virtues wherewith you have purchased great authority and singular favour with the King[1] of Polonia; I am rather bent unto an exhortation, the sum whereof shall be this, that with the like readiness and joyfulness wherewith you have at the beginning received the pure doctrine of the Gospel, that with the like stoutness of courage wherewith you have hitherto endeavoured to maintain the true worship of God, you do with the same constancy prosecute this course unto the end.

It was surely a point of rare virtue, that whereas you did know that many did hate nothing more than the frank profession and free study of godliness, yet, so soon as the truth of the Gospel of Christ did once shine and appear unto you, you did not fear by giving your name to provoke their hatred against you. Neither do those offices and good turns deserve small praise, which you did not cease to bestow upon the cherishing and increasing of the first beginnings of the Church; although this your diligence did purchase unto you great envy amongst many noblemen, which did not allow the same. But, because you have no less hard straits to pass

[1] "Serenissimum regem," most serene king.

through, you must oftentimes stir up and encourage yourself to overcome them all, until you have finished the last act; and, so much the more carefully, because many princes, although they see the estate of the Church filthily corrupt, yet dare they attempt no remedy; because that danger which they fear will proceed from innovation, when evils must be driven out of their old and quiet possession, doth hinder and keep them back from doing their duty. Other some think it to be an absurd and foolish thing to touch (or set hand to) diseases which are incurable. Other some (I cannot tell through what forwardness) do flee from and abhor all manner of reformation. But to intreat of those lets wherewith you are environed on every side, it were superfluous, especially seeing you know them well enough. Yet, howsoever Satan doth assault you, and with what combats soever he doth exercise you, you cannot, without great wickedness, be weary of this holy warfare, which you have professed under Christ his banner. Furthermore, although you be forward enough of yourself, yet I hope it will neither be troublesome, nor yet unprofitable for you, to have your prosperous course of your earnest study, holpen and furthered with this help which God doth offer unto your hands by me.[1]

So often as we see things tossed to and fro, and, as it were, turned topsy-turvy in the world, there can no more fit and sure prop be found to establish and stay our weak consciences, than when as setting before our eyes the kingdom of Christ, as it doth now appear, we consider what hath been[2] the estate and condition of the same from the beginning. When we speak of the kingdom of Christ, we must respect two things; the doctrine of the gospel, whereby Christ doth gather unto himself a church, and whereby he governeth the same, being gathered together; secondly, the society of the godly, who being coupled together by the sincere faith of the gospel, are truly accounted the people of God. Both which things, how lively

[1] "Tibi per manum meam," to you by my hand. [2] "Ratio ejus et natura," the nature and method, omitted.

they are expressed by Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, it is better to know by the reading of the whole book, than to believe either my commendation, or the commendation of any man else. For although the Son of God hath always reigned, even from the first beginning of the world, yet after that, being revealed in the flesh, he published his gospel, he began then to erect a more famous tribunal-seat than before, whence he doth now appear most plainly, and to be also most glorious. If we turn our eyes hither, they shall be fed, not with a vain picture, (as Virgil saith of his Æneas,) but with the sound knowledge of those things from which we must fetch life. And to the end I may return unto that whereof I determined to speak, this is the best refuge for the conscience of men, where they may quietly rest amidst these troublesome tempests wherewith the world is shaken. Finally, this meditation alone shall bring to pass, that that shall never befal us, which too too many experiments do prove to have been truly spoken by Ennius in times past of the more part of men, that *wisdom is driven away so often as the matter is handled by violence.* For if, in the greatest and most vehement heat of combats, the sweet harmony of instruments was of such force amongst the Lacedemonians, that it did assuage that furiousness and fierceness which was engendered in that warlike people, and did temper that violence which doth then out of measure rage in those natures which are otherwise impatient, how much more shall the kingdom of Christ do this by the heavenly pleasant tune of the Holy Ghost, which doth not only tame most cruel beasts, but maketh also lambs of wolves, lions, and bears; which turneth spears into hooks, and swords into ploughshares?

Therefore, seeing that, most noble prince, I offer unto you such kind of temperature as the necessity of times requireth, I hope that this duty of mine shall not be unwelcome to your highness; so that, indeed, you shall perceive this kind of confirmation to be very profitable and fit to look into the beginning of the Church, as it is described of Luke, wherein appeareth both wonderful power of God under the reproach of the cross, and also most valiant patience of the servants

of God, under the huge burden of troubles, and the success itself incredible to the judgment of the world, bringeth forth most plentiful fruit of both. But that I may omit other things which you had better set [seek] out by reading of Luke himself, I will touch one thing which is proper to earthly princes, and the chief governors of kingdoms and countries; to wit, that seeing that (the power of the whole world gainsaying, and all men which were then in authority being armed to oppress the gospel) a few men, obscure, unarmed, and contemptible, trusting only to the aid of the truth and the Spirit, did labour so stoutly in spreading abroad the faith of Christ, did refuse no pains nor danger, did stand stoutly against all assaults, until at length they got the victory; there remaineth no excuse for Christian nobles, who are of any dignity, seeing God hath furnished them with the sword to defend the kingdom of his Son, unless they be at least as constant and bold to take upon them such an honourable office.

Furthermore, it is not my part to declare how faithfully and uprightly I have behaved myself in interpreting this history. I hope, surely, my labour shall be fruitful to all men. And as for you, most worthy prince, I must again request and beseech you, that you do both privately addict yourself wholly unto Christ his government, as you have of late happily begun; and that you would also become not only a faithful helper, but also a most stout and valiant standard-bearer in furthering the kingdom of Christ unto so many noble men, whom not only the renown of their stock and lineage, but also the excellency of their virtues, doth commend. God hath vouchsafed to bestow upon the realm of Polonia a singular privilege of honour, that the better part of the nobility, bidding adieu to wicked superstitions, which are as many corruptions and pollutions of the worship of God, should desire with one consent a true form of godliness, and a well framed and reformed order of the Church. It is well known that these men were not a little aided by your authority. But there remain more combats both for you and also for them, than

that, like overworn[1] soldiers, you should give yourselves to idleness and rest.

First, although no foreign enemy trouble you, you shall have business enough to withstand those evils which are at home with you. You have sufficiently tried with how many sleights Satan is furnished, that he may work some policy to overthrow that holy concord amongst brethren, wherein consisteth the safety of the Church; that befalleth you which is common everywhere, for troublesome men to thrust in themselves when things are out of order; who, whilst they see a few, and those weaklings troubled by a great multitude, and that they do with much ado defend the truth, which is covered with the thick clouds of false accusations, they do more easily come upon them unawares.[2] And by this subtlety doth that chief worker of all deceit and guile seek the ruin of the Church, not only by cutting, mangling, and pulling in pieces the unity of the faith, but by burdening the name of Christ with false envy; because the companies of the godly, amongst whom these wicked knaves mix themselves, seem to be certain receptacles and sinks of all filthiness.

So, whilst that Stancarus, a man of a troublesome nature, doth, through that ambition wherewith he is wholly set on fire, spread abroad amongst you his dotings, hereupon brake out that contention which threateneth some scattering abroad; and you were laid open unto the slanders of many, because it was thought that his sect did spread itself farther. Behold, on the other side, a certain physician, called George Blandrata, worse than Stancarus, because his error is more detestable, and because he hath in his mind more secret poison. For which cause these also are the more worthy to be reproved, at whose hands the ungodliness of Servetus hath found such favour of such a sudden. For although I am persuaded that they are far from those perverse and sacrilegious opinions, yet they should have taken better heed, and not have suffered this fox craftily to creep

[1] "Emeriti," discharged veterans. [2] "Quasi per cuniculos," as by burrowing.

into their company. Because such plagues will never be wanting, neither will Satan ever cease to bring abroad into the forefront such champions as have given over themselves to serve him, that he may trouble the beginnings of the gospel, it is for you to be continually in a readiness; and to the end you may prevent greater evils, you must set down a right and godly manner of government, which is the faithful keeping of holy peace. For as it is manifest that purity of doctrine is the soul of the Church, so we may full well compare discipline unto the sinews, wherewith the body being bound and knit together, doth maintain his [its] strength.

Now, on the other side, the ungodliness of other enemies ought to sharpen your study (and earnestness,) I mean the preachers of Antichrist of Rome, who, to the end they may deceive the ignorant, do continually, with shrill voice, sound out the name of the Church. There is no controversy amongst us about the Church, but all grant that the authority thereof ought to be reverenced of all the children of God; save only that they, under false colour of honour, do make the shadowish name of the Church subject to their lusts; we do so reverence the Church from our heart, that we account it great wickedness to profane the sacred name thereof. That I may omit other godly ministers of pure and sound doctrine, I myself have again and again heretofore in many places handled this question. When mention is made of the Church, whose head is the Son of God, and which he, who is the fountain of life eternal, doth always quicken by his Spirit, how ridiculous a thing it is to bring forth a body without a head, and, secondly, a dead carcase.

The hireling flatterers of the Pope do cry out that they have the Church; but we can know by no means better, whether this be true or no, than when we look unto the head. As for that, it is manifest that it is cut off by their sacrilegious violence. For how shall Christ retain the place of the head, being despoiled of all his power, thrown down from his government, deprived of his dignity? Upon this condition hath the heavenly Father made him the head of the Church, that he may govern all men from the greatest

to the least, by the doctrine of his gospel; that he may be the only priest to reconcile the Father continually, as he hath once appeased his wrath by the sacrifice of his death; that his death may continually purge our sins; that his blood may be the only washing; that his obedience may be a perfect satisfaction; that he may be a (continual and) sole intercessor, through whose means our prayers may be heard; that he may be a faithful defender and tutor, that he may, by his aid, defend us; that (the vices of our flesh being tamed) he may reform us unto righteousness and holiness; that he alone may begin and finish in us a blessed life. If the Papists have left him any of these things, let them have the Church on their side. But if the Pope, oppressing men's consciences with his fierce and more cruel tyranny, have disannulled and taken away Christ his government; if he have brought in a form of government altogether contrary to the gospel; if he have invented a new and strange priesthood, that he may thrust in himself, being but a mortal man, to be the mediator between God and the world; if he have forged daily sacrifices, that he may put them in Christ's place; if he have invented a thousand satisfactions for sins; if he have brought feigned washings from the lake of hell, to make dry the blood of the Son of God; if he have put in his place infinite patrons; if he have torn in a thousand pieces that righteousness which must be set [sought] wholly from him; if, instead of the Holy Ghost, he have erected man's free-will; it is, without all question, that the true Christ is banished far from Papistry. For this cause have I said that the Papists make boast of a dead carcase instead of the lively body of Christ, because, though they have extinguished the doctrine of the gospel, (which is the true soul of the Church, and which duly doth quicken the same,) yet they do greatly boast of a shadowish and trifling kind of Church.

We make it full well known how corrupt the purity of doctrine is amongst them, yea, with what monstrous errors it is polluted. They do not only cover all their corruptions under the shadow of the Church, but also complain that we

do great injury to the Church, because we say that the same doth err. But they should first have examined the doctrine, that the Church might thereby be known. These just and honest judges will have the feigned title of doctrine to have sufficient force of prejudice to cover and suppress the difference, and that not to deceive men. For with what sleights and legerdemain would they assay to blear even dazzling eyes in so great light? But because they account this liberty of lying a part of their tyranny, they think they reign not as they would, unless they reproachfully mock miserable souls.

That we may set an example no farther, we have seen in our times, sometimes the Tridentine Fathers, sometimes the Fathers of Bononia, who, although they were even at daggers drawing among themselves, yet did they foam out their vain canons on both sides. And surely if men assent to their principles, the triumph shall be prepared on both sides. There sit there I cannot tell how many bishops and abbots, peradventure an hundred horned beasts. If the most fine flower of all the nation should shine there, yet should it be nothing else but a wicked conspiracy against God. And now after that the Pope hath gathered together the bran and chips of his unclean and filthy rotten flock, shall the representative Church suddenly appear there? And are they not yet ashamed to call that an holy, general, and lawful Council, which doth not deserve so much as to be called a vain and comical visor of a Council? But as for us, to whom the promise is made, that Antichrist, who sitteth in the temple of God, shall be destroyed with the breath of the Lord's mouth; let not us (I say) cease to refute this filthy and whorish impudency, with that most sacred word which they so boldly mock, that all men may see what difference there is between the chaste spouse of Christ and the stinking whore of Belial; between the sanctuary of God and the brothel-house of Satan; between the spiritual house of the godly and the stye of hogs; and, finally, between the true Church and the court of Rome. There can no more certain or plain demonstration be brought concerning this matter either by Euclid,

either yet by Archimedes, than if the Church, as Luke describeth it, be compared with the Popish synagogue. Neither am I so strait that I would have that confused lump, being altogether repugnant unto the order of nature and manner of humanity, to be agreeable in all points to the rule of the Apostles, which is angelical and heavenly. If they can show any thing wherein they are like unto them,[1] they may triumph for me; but forasmuch as all things are contrary, and although the more part of men become blind willingly, at least wise, [still] seeing the whole heavens do allow[2] us, we may not only contemn their brain-sick pride without any fear, but also freely speak evil of the same.

In the mean season, we have no small consolation to support us, that howsoever the Papists do set against us with stern countenance[3] the name and title of the Church, yet we know that we fight only against the professed enemies of Christ. We ought above all things to desire, that the most renowned king, who, according to his wisdom, hath long ago spied out the subtile sleights of the Romish court, commanding those vain bulls to avoid,[4] wherein the council boasteth afar off, may at length more freely apply his mind unto the earnest and perfect restoring of the Church; yet ought no lingering to keep you back, but every one of you must, with might and main, endeavour to enlarge and spread abroad those beginnings which are begun to arise so happily.

Farewell, most excellent lord and right renowned prince. The Lord always govern you with his Spirit, amplify by all means your dignity, and bless your godly enterprises even unto the end.

At Geneva, the 1st of August, 1560.

[1] "Sibi affine," have an affinity with them. [2] "Plaudente," applauding. [3] "Superciliose," superciliously, haughtily. [4] "Evanescere," to vanish, disappear.

THE ARGUMENT

UPON

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

To the intent that all godly men may, with more diligence, read this history, and also be more desirous thereof, it shall not be without profit briefly to note what commodity they shall reap thereby.

This is the chiefest praise that a profane history hath, namely, that it is the mistress of life. If that narration of famous deeds, which only teacheth men what they ought to follow, or what they ought to eschew, in their common actions, deserve such a title, of how great praise are the divine histories worthy, which do not only frame the outward life of man that he may win praise by virtue, but also (which is more) which declare unto us that God, from the beginning, hath had a special regard always of his Church, (and faithful congregation,) that he hath been always a most just revenger of all wrongs done unto those that have betaken themselves unto his tuition, and have committed themselves unto his custody; that he hath showed himself favourable and merciful unto most miserable and wretched sinners; and, lastly, by teaching us faith, raised us high above the heavens. I say nothing of this, that they do everywhere set forth the providence of God, that they distinguish the true worship of God from the false, and never err in the difference of vice and virtue; although I omit now also those worthy praises which used most commonly to be attributed unto the sacred histories, intending only shortly to touch those which are proper to this book which we have taken in hand.

Those things which Luke setteth before us in this place to

be learned are not only great, but also of rare profit; for, first, in that he showeth that the Spirit of God was sent unto the apostles, he doth not only prove that Christ was faithful (and true) in keeping his promise made unto his apostles; but also he certifieth us, that he is always mindful of his, and a perpetual governor of his Church, because the Holy Spirit did descend from heaven to this end; whereby we learn that the distance of place doth no whit hinder Christ from being present with those that be his at all times. Now, here is most lively painted out the beginning of Christ's kingdom, and as it were the renewing of the world; for although the Son of God had gathered together, by his preaching, a certain Church, before such time as he departed out of the world, yet, nevertheless, that was the best form of the Church which began then, when as the apostles, having new power given them from above, began to preach that that only Shepherd did both die and also rise again, that through his conduct all those which were dispersed, far and wide, (upon the face of the whole earth,) might be gathered unto one sheepfold. Here is, therefore, set down both the beginning and also the increasing of the Church of Christ after his ascension, whereby he was declared to be King both of heaven and earth.

Furthermore, therein appeareth, as well the marvellous power of Christ, as the great force and efficacy of the gospel itself; for in that Christ, by a sort of simple souls, (and of no reputation amongst men,) being indued also with no eloquence at all, hath subdued the whole world so easily, by the only voice of the gospel, whereas, notwithstanding Satan did resist him with so many lets, he hath showed a most manifest token of his divine power and might therein. And also, we see in the same the incredible force of the gospel, that it did not only come forth and show itself, although the whole world did say nay, but also with great glory and majesty, make all that which did seem stubborn to be obedient unto Christ. Therefore, these few and simple creatures did more prevail against the troublesome tumults of the world, with the base and simple sound

of their mouth, than if God should openly have thrown down lightnings[1] from heaven. And, on the other side, the Spirit of God teacheth us, that the kingdom of Christ beginneth never sooner to flourish, but by and by Satan opposeth himself most furiously against the same, and useth all his engines either utterly to overthrow, or sore to shake the same. Neither are we only taught, that Satan doth resist Christ as an enemy, but also that the whole world doth furiously rage together against him, that he may not reign over them. Yea, furthermore, that is to be set down as a thing most certain, that wicked men, whilst they do so rage against the gospel, do both fight under Satan's banner, and are pricked forward by him into so blind fury. Hereupon do arise so many uproars, so many plaguy conspiracies, so many devilish endeavours of the reprobate to overthrow the gospel, (and to hinder the free passage of the same,) which Luke setteth down almost in every place.

Lastly, like as the apostles have indeed tried,[2] that the doctrine of the gospel is a fire and a sword, so may we learn by their experience that it will always come to pass, not only by the obstinate malice of Satan, but also by the fatal stubbornness of men, that the gospel shall suffer many conflicts, and that thereby many tumults shall be raised. But, on the other side, he declareth that the apostles, (with a stout stomach,) with a lively courage and invincible violentness [force] of mind, did, notwithstanding, execute the office which they knew was enjoined them by God; and also, what innumerable troubles they suffered with great perseverance, what wearisomeness they passed over, how patiently they sustained most cruel persecution; and, lastly, how meekly they suffered reproach, sorrow, and calamity of all sorts. And we must learn patience by such examples, seeing the Son of God hath pronounced that the cross and tribulation shall always accompany his gospel; we must not pamper and cherish ourselves with a vain hope, as though the state and condition of the Church should be quiet (prosperous) and flourishing here

[1] "Fulminasset," have thundered.

[2] "Experto sunt," have experienced.

upon earth. Let us, therefore, address ourselves to suffer the like things. And that is added as no small comfort for us, that as God hath marvellously delivered his Church in times past, being afflicted and oppressed so many ways, so he will at this day be present with us also. For, surely, seeing that in this book is declared how that God, by his mighty hand and outstretched arm alone, doth continually defend his Church, being amidst continual deaths: God himself, by this means, setteth before our eyes his continual providence in procuring the safety thereof.

Furthermore, here are set down certain sermons of the apostles which intreat in such sort of the great mercies of God, of the grace of Christ, of the hope of blessed immortality, of the calling upon God, of repentance and the fear of God, and also of other principal points of Christian doctrine, that we need not seek the whole sum of godliness anywhere else. But that I may now omit the declaration of sound and pure doctrine,—if that be a thing most needful to be known, namely, to understand how the Church of Christ first began; how the apostles began to preach the gospel; what success they had in the same; what cruel combats they suffered; how manfully they passed through so many lets and impediments; how courageously they triumphed over all the pride of the world under the reproach of the cross; how wonderfully God was present with them: then must we highly esteem of this book, which, unless it were extant, the knowledge of so great things should either be quite buried, or greatly obscured, or wrapped in divers doubts. For we see that Satan used all his engines, that he might so bring to pass, that never any of the acts of the apostles might come to light, but such only as were mixed with lies; to the end he might bring into suspicion what thing soever was spoken of them, and so by that means might pluck out of the minds of the godly all the remembrance of that age. For he always raised up, either doting fools or crafty flouters,[1] that they might spread abroad a sort of filthy fables under the

[1] "Subsannatores," scoffers.

names of other men; the blockishness whereof did much discredit even the true histories.

So in those books of Peter and Paul, which are feigned to be of Linus his doing, are contained such a sort of stinking trifles, that they cause the wicked to laugh at them, and the godly to loathe them. So that feigned disputation of Peter with Simon Magus is so ridiculous, that it doth discredit the name of a Christian. The same opinion must we have of all that mingle-mangle[1] which is set before the Recognitions and Councils of Clement, and recited of Gratianus in his Fragments. They beguile the unskilful under colour of ancient names; the wicked boast of those as of oracles, no less boldly than impudently, when as, indeed, they are filthy toys. Satan did use such liberty to lie, that we might have no certain thing left us after Christ's ascension. So that unless this work[2] of Luke were extant, it might seem that Christ being taken up into heaven, left no fruit of his death or resurrection upon earth. For all should have vanished away with his body. We should not know that Christ was so received into his celestial glory, that, nevertheless, he beareth rule in all the world; we should not know that the gospel was published by the apostles, and so came from them unto us, though by the means of others;[3] we should not know that they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, lest they should teach anything but that which was divine, to the end our faith might be grounded only upon the infallible verity of God. Last of all, we should not know that that prophecy of Esaias was fulfilled, wherein he foretold that the law should come out of Sion, and the Word of the Lord out of Jerusalem.

Seeing this book proceeding, no doubt, from the Spirit of God, taketh from us all doubting of these things, we must count the same as a great treasure, as I have said before not without cause, and now again confirm the same.

[1] "Farragine," farrago. [2] "Monumentum," monument, memoir.
[3] "Per varias manus," through various hands.

COMMENTARY

UPON

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

1. *The former speech truly have we had, O Theophilus, of all things which Jesus began to do and teach,*
2. *Even until that day, wherein, after he had given commandment by the Holy Ghost to the apostles, which he had chosen, he was taken up.*

THAT he may pass over unto those things which followed the ascension of Christ, he briefly gathereth the sum of all those which before he had handled in the former book, that he may annex this thereunto. And he briefly setteth down this description of the history of the gospel, that it is a narration of those things which Christ did and said so long as he was conversant upon earth. Furthermore, whereas they interpret this commonly, that there was first in Christ purity of life, before such time as he began to preach, it maketh nothing unto Luke's mind. Truth it is, that the manners of a good and godly teacher ought so to be framed, that he speak first with his life, then with his tongue, otherwise he should differ nothing from a stage-player. But Luke hath respect rather unto that which he had said about the end of his gos-

pel, (Luke xxiv. 19,) namely, that Christ was a prophet mighty in deed and word, that is, such a one as did excel no less in deeds than in words; although there be but small difference betwixt these two places. For the mightiness of works which is commended there doth belong unto his miracles, but this, *to do*, doth reach further in my opinion, namely, that under the same are comprehended all the famous acts which were proper unto his ministry, wherein his death and resurrection are the chiefest. For the office of the Messias did not only consist in doctrine, but it was also behoveful that he should make peace between God and man, that he should be a Redeemer of the people, a restorer of the kingdom, and an author of everlasting felicity. All these things, I say, as they were promised of the Messias, so were they looked for at his hands.

Now we see that the sum of the gospel consisteth of these two parts, namely, of the doctrine of Christ, and of his acts; forasmuch as he did not only bring unto men that ambassage which was given him in charge of his Father, but also performed all things that could be required of the Messias. He began his kingdom, he pacified God with his sacrifice, he purged man's sins with his own precious blood, he subdued death and the devil, he restored us unto true liberty, he purchased righteousness and life for us. And to the end that whatsoever he either did or said might be certain, he proved himself by miracles to be the Son of God. So that this word, *to do*, is extended unto his miracles also; but it must not be restrained only unto the same. Here must we note, that those which have only the bare knowledge of the history have not the gospel; unless the knowledge of the doctrine which maketh manifest the fruits of the acts of Christ be adjoined thereunto. For this is a holy knot which no man may dissolve. Therefore, whensoever mention is made of the doctrine of Christ, let us learn to adjoin thereunto his works, as seals whereby the truth thereof is established and confirmed, and the effect declared. Furthermore, that we may reap commodity by his death and resurrection, and also that miracles may have their use, we must always have re-

spect unto him that speaketh. For this is the true rule of Christianity.

1. *Of all things which he began.* I do not greatly mislike the interpretation which some give of this place, that Luke said rather *of all* than *all;* because it is possible in some measure to intreat of the works and doctrine of Christ, but to set down the whole course, that the narration may be perfect, were a matter of great[1] weight. Like as John doth declare, that the world could not contain the books, (John xxi. 25.) That is also to be noted that Luke saith, that he began his history at the beginning of the works of Christ. But so soon as he hath declared the nativity of Christ, he passeth over unto the twelfth year of his age, (Luke ii. 42;) and after he had briefly spoken of his disputation had in the temple with the doctors, passing over eighteen years without speaking any thing of them, he entereth [on] the just narration of the works of Christ. It is, therefore, manifest that those works and sayings only which make any thing unto the sum of our salvation are noted in this place. For, after that Christ came abroad into the world clothed with our flesh, he lived privately at home until he was thirty years of age, at which time his Father put upon him another manner of person. God would have him to lead the former part of his life obscurely, to this end, that the knowledge of these things might be more excellent which do edify our faith.

The former speech. It seemed good to me to translate this on this wise, because λογον ποιεισθαι is the same with the Grecians, which *verba facere,* or to speak, is with the Latins, as Budæus doth note. And we must understand the contrariety of the second part, which he taketh in hand, that we may know that the evangelist determined with himself afresh to write, having new matter whereupon to write.

2. *Even until that day.* Therefore, the ascension of Christ

[1] "Nimiæ," too great.

is the end of the history of the gospel. For he hath ascended, saith Paul, that he might fulfil all things, (Ephes. iv. 10.) Our faith gathereth other fruit thereby; but it shall be sufficient to note in this place, that our redemption was fully complete and finished then when Christ did ascend unto his Father; and, therefore, that Luke did fully perform his duty in this narration, as touching the doctrine and works of Christ. And he is said to be taken up, that we may know that he is truly departed out of this world, lest we should consent unto their dotings who think that in his ascension there was no alteration of place made.

Commandment by the Holy Ghost. Luke showeth in these words, that Christ did not so depart out of the world that he did no longer care for us; for in that he hath ordained a perpetual government in his Church, he thereby declareth that he had a care to provide for our salvation; yea, he hath promised that he will be present with his to the end, (Matth. xxviii. 20,) like as, indeed, he is always present by his ministers. Luke, therefore, doth show unto us, that Christ did no sooner depart hence, but straightway he provided for the government of his Church; whence we may gather that he is careful for our salvation. And this his providence hath Paul plainly noted in the place lately cited, when he saith, That he hath fulfilled all things, making some apostles, some evangelists, some pastors, &c. But these commandments, which the evangelist saith Christ gave unto his disciples, do I interpret of the preaching of the gospel; like as ambassadors use to be instructed with certain precepts before they go of their ambassage, lest they should rashly attempt any thing contrary to his will and mind that sendeth them. And all this is spoken in commendation of that doctrine which the apostles taught. The which that it may appear more manifestly, every thing is to be marked in order as it lieth. First of all, he saith they were elect and chosen of Christ, that we may be certain of their calling unto that function. Neither doth he in this place set God's election against man's merits, but only affirmeth that they were raised up by God, and that they did not rashly take upon

them this function. That is true, indeed, that they were freely chosen; but now have we to inquire what is Luke's drift in this place. I say that he hath respect unto nothing else, but that we may be certain of the calling of the apostles, that we may learn not to have respect unto men, but unto the Son of God, the author thereof, because this must always be a maxim in the Church, that no man usurp any honour. Secondly, he saith, that they were instructed of Christ what they should do. As if he should say, that they uttered not their own inventions, but they delivered that sincerely and faithfully which was enjoined them by their heavenly Master. And to the end that that which Christ taught them might be the more reverenced, he addeth this, that this was done by the direction of the Holy Ghost. Not because the Son of God had any need to be guided by any other, who is eternal wisdom, but because he was also man, lest any man should think that he did deliver those things unto his disciples which he delivered by man's wit and reason, he calleth us back expressly unto the divine authority. Like as the Lord himself doth so often affirm, that he taught nothing but that which he had received of his Father; and therefore he saith, that his doctrine was not his own. Therefore, he signifieth that in the preaching of the gospel there is nothing which issueth from man's brain, but that it is the divine ordinance of the Spirit, whereunto the whole world must be subject.

3. *To whom also he showed himself alive, after that he had suffered, in many proofs, while that he is seen of them by the space of forty days, and he intreateth of the kingdom of God.*

4. *And when he had gathered them together, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but that they should wait for the promise of the Father; whereof, saith he, ye have heard of me:*

5. *Because John truly baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, after a few days.*

3. *Unto whom, &c.* He addeth this, that he might make the resurrection to be believed, as a thing most necessary to be

known, and without the which the whole gospel falleth flat to the ground, neither remaineth there any more faith. And that I may omit to speak of other discommodities that come by being ignorant of the resurrection of Christ, the gospel loseth his whole authority, unless we know and be also fully persuaded that Christ being alive, speaketh unto us from the heavens. Whereunto Luke hath chiefest respect in this place. Therefore, that the truth hereof might not be called in question, he saith that it was proved by many signs and tokens. Those which Erasmus, following an old interpreter, doth call arguments, I have translated proofs. For Aristotle doth call that τεκμηριον, in the first book of his *Rhetorics*, which is necessary in signs. This is, therefore, that which I said before, that Christ did make manifest his resurrection unto his apostles by evident tokens, which did serve instead of necessary proofs, lest they should doubt of the same. Furthermore, he doth not reckon up those tokens and signs, saving only that he saith, that Christ did appear unto them about the space of a month and one-half oftentimes. If he had but once appeared unto them, it might have been somewhat suspicious, but in showing himself so often unto them, he dissolveth all doubts which might arise in their minds, and by this means, also, he putteth away the reproach of the ignorance which he said was in the apostles, lest it discredit their preaching.

He intreateth of the kingdom of God. He telleth us again that the apostles themselves were well taught[1] before such time as they took upon them to teach others; therefore, whatsoever things they uttered and brought to light, either by word or by writing, touching the kingdom of God, they are those speeches which Christ himself uttered. And hereby doth he briefly set down the end of the doctrine of the gospel; namely, that God may reign in us. Regeneration is the beginning of this kingdom, and the end thereof is blessed immortality; the middle proceedings are in a more ample going forward and increase of regeneration. But that this

[1] "Ab unico magistro," by the only master, omitted.

thing may appear more evidently, we must first note, that we are born, and that we live aliens and strangers from the kingdom of God, until such time as God doth fashion us again unto a new life. Therefore, we may properly set the world, the flesh, and whatsoever is in man's nature against the kingdom of God, as contrary to it. For the natural man is wholly occupied about the things of this world, and he seeketh felicity here;[1] in the mean season, we are as it were banished from God, and he likewise from us; but Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, doth lift us up unto the meditation of the life to come. And to the end he may the better bring this to pass, he reformeth all our earthly affections, and so having stript us out of the vices of our flesh, he separateth us from the world. And, like as eternal death is prepared for all those which live after the flesh, so in as much as the inward man is renewed in us, that we may go forward in the spiritual life, we draw nearer unto the perfection of the kingdom of God; which is the society of the glory of God. Therefore, God will reign in and amongst us now, that he may at length make us partakers of his kingdom. Hereby we gather that Christ did principally intreat of the corruption of mankind; of the tyranny of sin, whose bond-slaves we are; of the curse and guiltiness of eternal death, whereunto we all are subject, and also of the means to obtain salvation; of the remission of sins; of the denying of the flesh; of spiritual righteousness; of hope of eternal life, and of like such things. And if we will be rightly instructed in Christianity, we must apply our studies to these things.

4. *Gathering them together, he commanded, &c.* They had before done the duty of Apostles; but that lasted but a while; and, secondly, so far forth that they might with their preaching awake the Jews to hear their Master. And so that commandment to teach, which Christ had given them, (Matth. x. 7,) whilst he lived with them upon earth, was, as it were, a certain entrance into their apostleship which

[1] "Et ultimum bonum," and it is his final good, omitted.

was to come, for which they were not yet ripe. Therefore, their ordinary function was not laid upon them, until such time as Christ was risen again; but they stirred up their nation (as I have said) like criers, that they might give ear to Christ. And then at length, after the resurrection, they were made Apostles, to publish abroad throughout the whole world that doctrine which was committed to them. And whereas after they were made Apostles, Christ commandeth them as yet to abstain from their office, that is done not without just cause; yea, many causes may be alleged why it should be so. That filthy forsaking of their Master was yet fresh; many notes and tokens of unbelief were yet fresh. Whereas, they had been so thoroughly taught, and had so suddenly forgotten all, they showed a manifest token of their great dulness of wit. Neither were they free from sluggishness, which could not otherwise fitly be purged, than by deferring the promised grace, that he might the more sharpen their desire. But this cause is chiefly to be noted, that the Lord did appoint a certain time for the sending of the Spirit, that the miracle might be the more apparent. Again, he suffered them to rest a while, that he might the better set forth the greatness of that business which he was about to commit unto them. And thereby is the truth of the gospel confirmed, because the Apostles were forbidden to address themselves to preach the same, until they should be well prepared in succession of time.

And they were commanded to stay together, because they should all have one spirit given them. If they had been dispersed, the unity should not have been so well known. Though they were scattered abroad afterwards in divers places, yet because they brought that which they had from one and the same fountain, it was all one, as if they always had had all one mouth. Furthermore, it was expedient that they should begin to preach the gospel at Jerusalem, that the prophecy might be fulfilled, "There shall a law go out of Zion, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem," (Isa. ii. 3.) Although the participle συναλιζόμενος may be diversely translated, yet Erasmus his translation did please me best,

because the signification of *gathering together* will agree better with the text, [context.]

They should wait for the promise. It was meet that these should be accustomed to obey first, who should shortly after lay Christ's yoke upon the neck of the world. And surely they have taught us by their example, that we must work and rest at the Lord's pleasure alone. For if, during our life, we go on warfare under his banner and conduct, surely he ought to have no less authority over us than any earthly captain hath in his army. Therefore, as warlike discipline requireth this, that no man wage unless he be commanded by the captain, so it is not lawful for us cither to go out, or to attempt any thing, until the Lord give the watchword; and so soon as he bloweth the retreat, we must stay, [halt.] Moreover, we are taught that we are made partakers of the gifts of God through hope. But we must mark the nature of hope as it is described in this place. For that is not hope which every man feigneth to himself unadvisedly, but that which is grounded on the promise of God. Therefore Christ doth not suffer his apostles to look for whatsoever they will, but he addeth expressly the promise of the Father. Furthermore, he maketh himself a witness thereof; because we ought to be so sure and certain, that although all the engines of hell gainstand us, yet this may remain surely fixed in our minds, that we have believed God. I know, saith Paul, whom I have believed, (2 Tim. i. 12.) And here he putteth them in mind of those things which are written in John xiv. 15, 16, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may continue with you; I say the Spirit of truth," &c. Again, "I have spoken these things unto you while I am with you." "And the Spirit, whom my Father shall send in my name, shall teach you all things," (John xiv. 25, 26,) &c. And again, "When the Spirit of truth shall come, whom I will send from my Father, he shall bear witness of me," (John xv. 26.) And again, "If I shall go hence, I will send you the Comforter, who shall reprove the world," (John xvi. 7.) And he had

said long before, "He which believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," (John vii. 38.)

5. *Because John truly.* Christ repeateth this unto his apostles out of John's own words. For some part of them had heard that at John's mouth, which the Evangelists report, "I truly baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Now Christ pronounceth that they shall well perceive that that is true indeed which he said. Furthermore, this serveth greatly to confirm the sentence next going before, for it is an argument drawn from the office of Christ. And that thus: John was sent to baptize with water, he fulfilled his function as it became the servant of God. The Son of God is sent to baptize with the Holy Ghost; it remained, therefore, that he do his duty. Neither can it be otherwise but he must do that which his Father hath commanded him to do, and for which also he came down into the earth. But it seemeth a very absurd thing to restrain that unto the visible sending of the Holy Ghost, which was spoken universally of regeneration.[1] I answer, that Christ did not then only baptize with the Holy Ghost, when as he sent him under the form of fiery tongues; for he had baptized his apostles before this; and he baptizeth all the elect thus daily. But because the sending of the Holy Ghost after so glorious a sort was a token of the hidden grace wherewith he doth daily inspire his elect, he doth fitly apply thereunto the testimony of John. And truly this was as though it had been the common baptism of the Church. For besides that the apostles did not receive the Spirit for themselves only, but for the use of all the faithful, there was also declared the universal favour of Christ towards his Church, while that he poured out thereupon the gifts of his Spirit in great abundance.

[1] "Generaliter de gratia regenerationis," generally of the grace of regeneration.

Although, therefore, he doth daily baptize the elect of his Father, yet was this no let why he might not show forth this token to be remembered above all others, that the apostles might know that they were only entered by John; and that not in vain, seeing their perfection was hard at hand. And that is frivolous which some gather out of this place most commonly,[1] namely, that the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ were diverse. For here doth not he dispute in this place of baptism, but maketh only a comparison betwixt the person of John and the person of Christ. When as John did say that he did baptize with water only, he did not reason of what sort his baptism was; but what he himself was; lest he should arrogate that unto himself which was proper to Christ. As also, the ministers in these days ought not to speak otherwise of themselves; but they must acknowledge Christ to be the author of all those things which they do prefigure in the outward baptism, and leave nothing to themselves save only the outward administration. For when as these titles are attributed unto baptism, namely, that it is the laver of regeneration, (Titus iii. 5,) a washing away of sins, the fellowship of death, and burying with Christ, (Rom. vi. 4,) and a grafting into the body of Christ, it is not declared what man, being the minister of the outward sign, doth; but rather what Christ doth, who only giveth force and efficacy unto the signs. We must always hold fast this distinction, lest, whilst we deck man too much, we take from Christ.[2]

But here may a question be moved, why he doth rather name John here than any other; first, It is manifest enough that John did profess himself to be the minister of the outward sign, namely, of water, and that Christ was the author of the spiritual baptism; secondly, Because it was meet that John should decrease and Christ increase; and, thirdly, Because the apostles did so much esteem of John, (John iii. 30,) it might have been that thereby the glory of Christ might have

[1] "Ex hoc loco et similibus vulgo colligunt," commonly gather out of this and similar passages. [2] "Christum spoliemus," we rob Christ.

been obscured. Therefore, Christ, to the end he might reclaim them to himself, telleth them that John did only minister unto them the external baptism; notwithstanding, he confirmeth them also, lest they should doubt of the promise; for they did attribute very much unto John, and therefore were they persuaded that the baptism which they had received by him was not in vain. Now, if that the verity and force thereof must be looked for at Christ's hands, then ought the apostles to hope that that shall surely be fulfilled which John prefigured.

So must we, in like manner, think that we are not in vain baptized with water by men, because Christ, who commanded the same to be done, will fulfil his office, and baptize us with the Spirit. So faith draweth a consequent from the outward sign unto the inward effect; yet doth it not attribute any more than is meet, either to the sign or to the minister thereof, because in the sign it only looketh unto the promise, which is Christ's, and doth acknowledge him to be the only author of grace. Let us, therefore, use such a mean that we do in no part diminish Christ's honour; and yet, nevertheless, let us hope for that fruit by our baptism which is noted in this place. By assigning so short a time our Saviour maketh them more joyful to hope well. Whereupon it followeth, that that death was not to be lamented which brought with it presently so precious fruit. And let us note this also, that this word baptism is used improperly in this place, that the contrariety may be full. After the same sort, Paul, in his Epistle unto the Romans, (Rom. iii. 26,) after he hath set down the law of works, to the end that the contrary may answer on the other side, he useth the law of faith for faith itself.

6. *And when they were gathered together, they asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?*

7. *And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath placed in his own power.*

8. *But you shall receive power when as the Spirit shall come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me, as well at Je-*

rusalem as in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the farthest part of the earth.

6. He showeth that the apostles were gathered together when as this question was moved, that we may know that it came not of the foolishness of one or two that it was moved, but it was moved by the common consent of them all; but marvellous is their rudeness, that when as they had been diligently instructed by the space of three whole years, they betray no less ignorance than if they had heard never a word. There are as many errors in this question as words. They ask him as concerning a kingdom; but they dream of an earthly kingdom, which should flow with riches, with dainties, with external peace, and with such like good things; and while they assign the present time to the restoring of the same, they desire to triumph before the battle; for before such time as they begin to work they will have their wages. They are also greatly deceived herein, in that they restrain Christ's kingdom unto the carnal Israel, which was to be spread abroad, even unto the uttermost parts of the world. Furthermore, there is this fault in all their whole question, namely, that they desire to know those things which are not meet for them to know. No doubt, they were not ignorant what the prophets did prophesy concerning the restoring of David's kingdom, they had oftentimes heard their Master preach concerning this matter. Lastly, It was a saying common in every man's mouth, that, in the most miserable captivity of the people, they should all be comforted, with the expectation of the kingdom that should be. Now, they hoped for the restoring hereof at the coming of the Messias, and hereupon was it that so soon as the apostles saw their Master Christ risen from the dead, they straightway began to think thereupon; but, in the meantime, they declared thereby how bad scholars they were under so good a Master. Therefore doth Christ briefly comprehend[1] in this short answer all the errors whereinto they fell in this their

[1] "Perstringit," reprimand.

question, as I shall straightway declare. To restore, in this place, doth signify to set up again that which was fallen, and through many ruins grown out of fashion; for out of the dry stock of Isai [Jesse] should spring a Branch, and the tabernacle of David, which was laid waste,[1] should be erected and set on foot again.

7. *It is not for you to know, &c.* This is a general reprehension of the whole question. For it was too curious for them to desire to know that whereof their Master would have them ignorant; but this is the true means to become wise, namely, to go as far forward in learning as our Master Christ goeth in teaching, and willingly to be ignorant of those things which he doth conceal from us. But forasmuch as there is naturally engendered in us a certain foolish and vain curiosity, and also a certain rash kind of boldness, we must diligently observe this admonition of Christ, whereby he correcteth both these vices. But to the end we may know what his meaning is hereby, we must mark the two members which he joineth together. "It is not for you" (saith he) "to know those things which the Father hath placed in his own power." He speaketh, indeed, of the times and seasons; but seeing there is the like reason in other things, we must think this to be a universal precept, That being contented with the revelation of God, we think it an heinous crime to inquire any farther. This is the true mean between the two extremes. The Papists, that they may have somewhat wherewith to cloak their gross ignorance, say for themselves, that they omit the hidden mysteries of God, as though our whole faith and religion did consist upon any thing else than upon the hidden mysteries of God; then may we take our leave of Christ and his gospel, if we must abstain utterly from the hidden mysteries of God. But we must keep, as I said before, a mean herein; for we must be desirous to learn so far as our heavenly Master doth teach us; but as for such things as he will have us ignorant of, let none be so bold as

[1] "Misere dissipatum," miserably laid waste.

to inquire after them, that we may be wise with sobriety. Therefore, so often as we are vexed with this foolish desire of knowing more than we ought, let us call to mind this saying of Christ, "It is not for you to know." For unless we will burst in against his will and commandment, this shall have force and strength enough to restrain the outrageousness of our wits.

Now, as touching the foreknowledge of times, Christ condemneth only the searching out thereof which reacheth beyond the measure of God's revelation; and that is to be noted out of the second member, as before I have said, "which the Father hath placed in his own power." Truth it is, that God hath in his own power winter and summer, and the rest of the seasons of the year, cold and heat, fair weather and foul. But because he hath testified that the course of the years shall be perpetual, (Gen. i. 41,) he is said not to have placed that in his own power which he hath revealed unto men. What thing soever the philosophers or husbandmen do comprehend or understand by art, by learning, by judgment, or experience, all that doth God not retain unto himself, because he hath after a certain sort revealed it unto them, (Gen. viii. 22.) The same opinion must we have of the prophets; for it was their office to know those things which God did reveal. But we must be ignorant of the secret events of things, as touching the time to come; for there is nothing which may make us more slack in doing our duties, than too careful an inquisition herein, for we will always take counsel according to the future event of things; but the Lord, by hiding the same from us, doth prescribe unto us what we ought to do. Here ariseth a conflict, because we will not willingly suffer God to have that which is his own, namely, the sole government and direction of things which are to come; but we cast ourselves into a strange and inordinate carefulness. To conclude, Christ forbiddeth us to apply those things unto ourselves, which God doth challenge as proper to himself alone. Of this sort is the foreknowledge of those things which God hath

taken to himself to govern and direct, according to his own pleasure, far contrary to our opinion, and otherwise than we could invent.[1]

8. *You shall receive power.* Our Saviour Christ doth here call them back as well unto the promise of God as also unto his commandment, which was the readiest way to bridle their curiosity. Curiosity doth rise almost always either of idleness or else of distrust; distrust is cured by meditating upon the promises of God. And his commandments do tell us how we ought to occupy ourselves and employ our studies. Therefore, he commandeth his disciples to wait for the promise of God, and to be diligent in executing their office whereunto God had called them. And in the mean season he noteth[2] their great hastiness, in that they did preposterously catch at those gifts which were proper unto the Holy Spirit, when as they were not as yet endued with the same. Neither did they take the right way herein, in that being called to go on warfare, they desire (omitting their labour) to take their ease in their inn.[3] Therefore, when he saith, *you shall receive power*, he admonisheth them of their imbecility, lest they follow before the time those things whereunto they cannot attain. It may be read very well either way, You shall receive the power of the Spirit; or, The Spirit coming upon you; yet the latter way seemeth to be the better, because it doth more fully declare their defect and want, until such time as the Spirit should come upon them.

You shall be my witnesses. He correcteth two errors of theirs in this one sentence. For, first, he showeth that they must fight before they can triumph; and, secondly, that the nature of Christ's kingdom was of another sort than they judged it to have been. Therefore, saith he, *You shall be my witnesses;* that is, the husbandman must first work before he can reap his fruits. Hence may we learn that we

[1] "Supra ingenii nostri captum," beyond the reach of our minds.
[2] "Perstringit," reprimandeth. [3] "Molliter quiescere," to take soft repose.

must first study how we may come unto the kingdom of God, before we begin to dispute[1] about the state of the life to come. Many there be which do curiously inquire what manner [of] blessedness that shall be which they shall enjoy after they shall be received into the everlasting kingdom of heaven, not having any care how they may come to enjoy the same.[2] They reason concerning the quality of the life to come, which they shall have with Christ; but they never think that they must be partakers of his death, that they may live together with him, (2 Tim. ii. 11.) Let every man, therefore, apply himself in his work which he hath in hand; let us fight stoutly under Christ's banner; let us go forward manfully and courageously[3] in our vocation, and God will give fruit in due time (and tide.) There followeth another correction, when he saith, that they must be his *witnesses.* For hereby he meant to drive out of his disciples' minds that fond and false imagination which they had conceived of the terrestrial kingdom, because he showeth unto them briefly, that his kingdom consisteth in the preaching of the gospel. There was no cause, therefore, why they should dream of riches,[4] of external principality, or any other earthly thing, whilst they heard that Christ did then reign when as he subdueth unto himself (all the whole) world by the preaching of the gospel. Whereupon it followeth that he doth reign spiritually, and not after any worldly manner. And that which the apostles had conceived of the carnal kingdom proceeded from the common error of their nation; neither was it marvel if they were deceived herein.[5] For when we measure the same with our understanding, what else can we conceive but that which is gross and terrestrial? Hereupon it cometh, that, like brute beasts, we only desire that which is commodious for our flesh, and therefore we rather catch that which is present. Wherefore, we see that

[1] "Subtiliter philosophemur," we subtilely philosophize. [2] "Atqui in primis renunciandum erat mundo," but they ought, in the first instance, to renounce the world, omitted. [3] "Indefessis animis," with unwearied minds, indefatigably. [4] "Delicias," dainties. [5] "Hac in parte omnes fuisse hallucinatos," that they all laboured under this hallucination.

those which held opinion, that Christ should reign as a king in this world a thousand years[1] fell into the like folly. Hereupon, also, they applied all such prophecies as did describe the kingdom of Christ figuratively by the similitude of earthly kingdoms unto the commodity of their flesh; whereas, notwithstanding, it was God's purpose to lift up their minds higher. As for us, let us learn to apply our minds to hear the gospel preached, lest we be entangled in like errors, which prepareth a place in our hearts for the kingdom of Christ.[2]

In all Judea. Here he showeth, first, that they must not work for the space of one day only, while that he assigneth the whole world unto them, in which they must publish the doctrine of the gospel. Furthermore, he refuteth[3] the opinion which they had conceived of Israel. They supposed those to be Israelites only which were of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. Christ testifieth that they must gather thereunto all Samaria; which, although they were nigh in situation, yet were they far distant in mind and heart. He showeth that all other regions far distant, and also profane, must be united unto the holy people, that they may be all partakers of one and the same grace. It is evident (John iv. 9) how greatly the Jews did detest the Samaritans. Christ commanded that (the wall of separation being broken down) they be both made one body, (Eph. ii. 14,) that his kingdom may be erected everywhere. By naming Judea and Jerusalem, which the apostles had tried[4] to be full of most deadly enemies, he foretelleth them of the great business and trouble which was prepared for them, that he may cause them to cease to think upon this triumph which they hoped to have been so nigh at hand.[5] Neither could they be a little afraid to come before so cruel enemies, more to inflame

[1] "Chiliastas," the Chiliasts. [2] Transpose thus: As for us, lest we be entangled in like errors, let us learn to apply our minds to hear the gospel preached, (a preached gospel,) which prepareth a place in our heart for the kingdom of Christ. [3] "Oblique refutat," indirectly refuteth. [4] "Experti sunt," experienced. [5] "Ut de propinquo triumpho cogitare desinant," that they may cease to think of a near triumph.

their rage and fury. And here we see how he giveth the former place unto the Jews, because they are, as it were, the first-begotten, (Exod. iv. 22.) Notwithstanding, he calleth those Gentiles one with another, which were before strangers from the hope of salvation, (Eph. ii. 11.) Hereby we learn, that the gospel was preached everywhere by the manifest commandment of Christ, that it might also come unto us.

9. *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up on high, and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

10. *And while they looked up stedfastly into heaven, as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,*

11. *Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him go into heaven.*

9. The readers may learn out of our Institutions what profit we reap by the ascension of Christ. Notwithstanding, because it is one of the chiefest points of our faith, therefore doth Luke endeavour more diligently to prove the same; yea, rather, the Lord himself meant to put the same out of all doubt, when as he hath ascended so manifestly, and hath confirmed the certainty of the same by other circumstances. For, if so be it he had vanished away secretly, then might the disciples have doubted what was become of him;[1] but now, sith that they, being in so plain a place,[2] saw him taken up with whom they had been conversant, whom also they heard speak even now, whom they beheld with their eyes, whom also they see taken out of their sight by a cloud, there is no cause why they should doubt whither he was gone. Furthermore, the angels are there also to bear witness of the same. And it was needful that the history should have been set down so diligently for our cause, that we may know

[1] "Hæsissent attoniti," might have stood astonished. [2] "Quam in edito et undique experto ac patente loco et constituti," when they were standing on an elevated spot, open on all sides, with nothing to interrupt the view.

assuredly, that although the Son of God appear nowhere upon earth, yet doth he live in the heavens. And this seemeth to be the reason why the cloud did overshadow him, before such time as he did enter into his celestial glory; that his disciples being content with their measure[1] might cease to inquire any further. And we are taught by them that our mind is not able to ascend so high as to take a full view of the glory of Christ; therefore, let this cloud be a mean to restrain our boldness, as was the smoke which was continually before the door of the tabernacle in the time of the law.

10. *Two men.* He calleth them so by reason of their form. For although it might be that they had the bodies of men in deed, concerning which thing I will not greatly stand in defence of either part, yet certain it is they were not men; but because this *metonymia* is commonly used in the Scriptures, especially in the First Book of Moses, I will not greatly stand thereupon. Their *white garments* were a token of rare and excellent dignity. For God meant by this, as by an evident token to distinguish them from the common sort of people, that the disciples might give better ear unto them;[2] and that at this day we also may know that this vision was showed them of God.

11. *Ye men of Galilee, &c.* I am not of their opinion who think that this name was given the apostles after an opprobrious sort, as if the angels meant to reprehend the slowness and dulness of the apostles. In my opinion, it was rather to make them more attentive, in that men, whom they did never see before, did name them as though they had perfectly known them. But they seem to reprehend without cause, for looking up into heaven. For where should they rather seek for Christ than in heaven? Doth

[1] "Modulo," little measure.

[2] "Ad eorum dicta attentiores," might be more attentive to what they said.

not the Scriptures also oftentimes exhort us thereunto? I answer, that they were not reprehended because they looked up towards heaven; but because they coveted to see Christ, when as the cloud which was put between them and him did keep them from seeing him with their bodily senses: Secondly, because they hoped that he would return again straightway, that they might enjoy the sight of him again, when as he did ascend to stay in the heavens until such time as he should come[1] to judge the world. Wherefore, let us first learn out of this place that we must not seek Christ either in heaven, either upon earth, otherwise than by faith; and also, that we must not desire to have him present with us bodily in the world; for he that doth[2] either of those two shall oftentimes go farther from him. So this their admiration is reprehended, not simply, but inasmuch as they were astonied by the strangeness of this matter; like as we are oftentimes carried unadvisedly into a wonderful great wondering at God's works; but we never apply ourselves to consider for what end and purpose they were done.

Jesus, which is taken up into heaven. There are two members in this one sentence. The first is, that Christ was taken up into heaven, that they may not henceforth foolishly desire to have him any longer conversant with them upon earth. The other is straightway added as a consolation concerning his second coming. Out of these two jointly, and also severally, is gathered a firm, stable, and strong argument, to refute the Papists, and all other which imagine that Christ is really present in the signs of bread and wine. For when it is said that Christ is taken up into heaven; here is plainly noted the distance of place. I grant that this word *heaven* is interpreted divers ways, sometimes for the air, sometimes for the whole connection[3] of the spheres, sometimes for the glorious kingdom of God, where the majesty of God hath his [its] proper seat, howsoever it doth fill the whole world. After which sort Paul doth place Christ above

[1] "Secundo," a second time, omitted.
[2] "Hærebit," shall cling to.
[3] "Complexa," system.

all heavens, (Eph. i. 22,) because he is above all the world, and hath the chiefest room in that place of blessed immortality, because he is more excellent than all the angels, (Eph. iv. 15.) But this is no let why he may not be absent from us bodily, and that by this word *heavens*, there may not be signified a separation from the world. Let them cavil as much as they will, it is evident that the heaven whereinto Christ was received is opposite to the frame of the world; therefore it doth necessarily follow, that if he be in heaven, he is without [beyond] the world.

But, first, we must mark what the purpose of the angels was, for thereby we shall more perfectly know what the words mean. The angels' intent was to call back the apostles from desiring the carnal presence of Christ. For this purpose was it that they said that he should not come again until he came to judge the world. And to this end serveth the assigning of the time, that they might not look for him in vain before that same time. Who seeth not that in these words is manifestly showed that he was bodily absent out of the world? Who seeth not that we are forbidden to desire to have him upon the earth? But they think they escape safe with that crafty answer, when as they say that then he shall come visibly; but he cometh now invisibly daily. But we are not here to dispute of his form; only the apostles are taught that Christ must abide in heaven until such time as he appear at the latter day. For the desiring of his corporeal presence is here condemned as absurd and perverse. The Papists deny that he is present in the sacrament carnally, while that his glorious body is present with us after a supernatural sort, and by a miracle; but we may well enough reject their inventions concerning his glorious body, as childish and frivolous toys. They feign unto themselves a miracle not confirmed with any testimony of Scripture. The body of Christ was then glorious, when as he was conversant with his disciples after his resurrection. This was done by the extraordinary and secret power of God; yet, notwithstanding, the angels do forbid to desire him afterward after that sort, and they say

that he shall not come unto men in that sort (before the latter day.) Therefore, according to their commandment, let us not go about to pull him out of the heavens with our own inventions; neither let us think that we can handle him with our hands, or perceive him with our other senses, more than we can see him with our eyes. I speak always of his body. For in that they say it is infinite, as it is an absurd dream, so is it safely to be rejected. Nevertheless, I willingly confess that Christ is ascended that he may fulfil [fill] all things; but I say that he is spread abroad everywhere by the power of his Spirit, not by the substance of his flesh. I grant, furthermore, that he is present with us both in his word and in the sacraments. Neither is it to be doubted, but that all those which do with faith receive the signs of his flesh and blood, are made truly partakers of his flesh and blood. But this partaking doth nothing agree with the dotings of the Papists; for they feign that Christ is present in such sort upon the altar as Numa Pompilius did call down his Jupiter Elicitus, or as those witches did fetch down the moon from heaven with their enchantments. But Christ, by reaching us the bread in his Supper, doth will us to lift up our hearts into heaven, that we may have life by his flesh and blood. So that we do not eat his flesh grossly, that we may live thereby, but he poureth into us, by the secret power of his Spirit, his force and strength.

He shall so come. I have said before, that by this consolation all sorrow which we might conceive, because of Christ's absence, is mitigated, yea, utterly taken away, when as we hear that he shall return again. And also the end for which he shall come again is to be noted; namely, that he shall come as a Redeemer, and shall gather us with him into blessed immortality. For as he doth not now sit idle in heaven, (as Homer signifieth, that his gods be busied only about their bellies;) so shall not he appear again without profit. Therefore, the only looking for Christ's coming must both restrain the importunate desires of our flesh, and support our patience in all our adversities; and, lastly, it must refresh our weariness. But it worketh this only in

the faithful, which believe that Christ is their Redeemer; for it bringeth unto the wicked nothing but dread, horror, and great fearfulness. And howsoever they do now scoff and jest when as they hear of his coming, yet shall they be compelled to behold him sitting upon his tribunal-seat, whom now they will not vouchsafe to hear speak. Furthermore, it were but frivolous to move any question about his apparel wherewith he was then clothed, whether he shall come again being clothed with the same or no. Neither am I now determined to refute that which Augustine, in his Epistle unto Consentius, doth touch, (*August. ad Con.* Epist. 146;) notwithstanding, it is better for me to omit that thing which I cannot unfold.

12. *Then they returned unto Jerusalem from the mountain which is called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, being distant about a Sabbath-day's journey.*

13. *And, coming in, they went up into an upper chamber, where abode Peter and James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*

14. *These all abode together with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the wives,* (or women,) *and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

12. That he may pass over unto another history, he showeth that the disciples being returned unto Jerusalem, dwelt together in one parlour. For it was the upper part of the house, which used to be let out unto those which did hire houses;[1] for the most commodious places were reserved unto them that were masters of the house, (for their own use.) Wherefore, by this word Luke doth signify that they were driven into a strait room;[2] and yet, notwithstanding, though this commodity were great, yet they did not part asunder. They might have been more commodiously asunder, yet

[1] "Inquilinis," tenants or lodgers. [2] "In angustum locum fuisse constrictos," were confined to a narrow space.

might they not part company before they had received the Spirit. In that he noteth here the distance of place, it bringeth credit unto the history. Unless, peradventure, he meant hereby to declare that they were not terrified with any fear of danger, but that they did all return and kept company together in one house, which was not so large, but that the company being greater than the place could well contain, it might breed some rumour (or noise.) A Sabbath-day's journey was two miles, and that account doth well agree with the place of John xi. 18, where he saith, "that Jerusalem was distant from Bethany almost fifteen furlongs;" which containeth about a thousand and nine hundred paces. And the mount Olivet was at the side of Bethany. There was no Sabbath-day's journey prescribed in the law; for the Lord doth command them simply to rest upon the Sabbath-day in the law.[1] But because the Jews could not easily be ruled, but that they would run abroad about their business upon the Sabbath-day, (as the Lord himself doth complain, "that they did bear burdens out at the gates,") (Jer. xvii. 24,) therefore, it is to be thought that it was determined by the priests,[2] (to the end they might restrain such enormities,) that no man should travel upon the Sabbath-day above two miles. Although Jerome, in his Answers unto Algasia, doth say that this tradition did come from two Rabbins, namely, from Atriba, and from Simon Heli.

13. *Where they abode.* Some translate it, *where they did abide;* as though they did use to dwell there. But I am of that opinion, that they did then first of all use that hired room to dwell together in, until such time as the Holy Spirit was come upon them. Too, too ridiculous are the Papists, which go about to prove Peter his supremacy[3] hereby, because he is reckoned up first of all the apostles. Although

[1] More properly, For the Lord doth in the law command, &c.

[2] "Communi sacerdotum concilio," by the common council of the priests, the Sanhedrim.

[3] "Primatum," primacy.

we do grant that he was the chiefest of the apostles, yet it doth not follow hereupon that he was the chiefest ruler of all the world. But if he be, therefore, the chief of all the apostles, because his name is first in the catalogue of the apostles' names, I will again conclude, that the mother of Christ was inferior unto all the rest of the women, because she is [here] reckoned the last; which they will in no case admit, as indeed it were a thing too absurd. Wherefore, unless they will set their Papacy to be laughed at of all men, as hitherto they have done, they must leave off to adorn it with such foolish toys. But what is their intent? Forsooth, they will prove out of the Scriptures that there was a secondary head of the Church, inferior to Christ; whereas there is no syllable in the Scripture which is consenting unto this their foolish invention. No marvel is it, therefore, if they do snatch here and there certain places, which, although no man smite them out of their hands, they will let fall of their own accord. But omitting them, let us mark what is Luke's purpose in this place. Because the disciples had fallen away, and filthily fled from their Master Christ, every man whither fear did drive him, (Matth. xxvi. 56,) they did deserve, like forsakers of their masters, or runagates, to be deprived of honour. Therefore, that we may know that by the appointment of the Lord they were gathered together again, and restored to their former degree, Luke reckoneth up all their names.

14. *With their wives.* Some translate it *women;* and they think that he speaketh of those which accompanied Christ. As I will not contend with any man concerning this matter, so have I not doubted to prefer that which I thought was more probable. I grant that the word which Luke useth may be interpreted both ways. But this is my reason, why I do think that he speaketh rather of wives, because, seeing that they used afterward to carry their wives about with them, as Paul doth testify, (1 Cor. ix. 5,) it is not likely that they were then asunder. For they might more easily rest

together in one place, than by wandering to and fro oftentimes to change their abiding; and, secondly, seeing that they did look for the coming of the Holy Ghost, which was even then at hand, what reason was there why they should deprive their wives of so great goodness? Peter's wife was about to be a helper unto him shortly after, which we must also think of the rest of the wives. These women had need of heroical fortitude and constancy, lest they should faint. Who would, therefore, think that they were excluded from their husbands whilst they look for the coming of the Spirit? But if they will stick to the general word, it standeth with reason that there were married women in the company. Howsoever it be, it is Luke's mind to tell us by the way how greatly they had changed their minds.[1] For whereas before the men, being afraid, had fled away, the women are gathered together with them now, neither do they fear any danger. He doth reckon up the mother of Jesus with the other women, whom, notwithstanding, John is said to have kept at his own house. But, as I have said before, they met altogether now only for a short season; for it is not to be doubted but that they departed one from another afterwards. It is well known that amongst the Hebrews all kinsfolk are comprehended under this word *brethren*.

All these did continue. Here he showeth that they did diligently look for the coming of the Holy Spirit. For this was the cause of their prayer, that Christ would send his Spirit, as he had promised. Whereupon we may gather that this is the true faith which stirreth us up to call upon God. For the security of faith doth much differ from sluggishness. Neither doth God, therefore, assure us of this grace, that our minds may straightway become careless, but that he may rather sharpen our desire to pray. Neither is prayer any sign of doubting, but rather a testimony of our (sure hope and) confidence, because we ask those things at the Lord's hands which we know he hath promised. So it becometh us also (after their example) to be instant in prayer,[2]

[1] "In melius," for the better.

[2] "Ut precibus nostris concedat," that he would grant our prayers.

and to beg at God's hands that he will increase in us his Holy Spirit:[1] increase, (I say,) because before we can conceive any prayer we must needs have the first-fruits of the Spirit. For as much as he is the only Master which teacheth us to pray aright, who doth not only give us utterance, (Rom. ii. 25,) but also governs our inward affections.

Furthermore, Luke doth express two things which are proper to true prayer, namely, that they did persist, and that they were all of one mind. This was an exercise of their patience, in that Christ did make them stay a while,[2] when as he could straightway have sent the Holy Spirit; so God doth oftentimes drive off,[3] and, as it were, suffer us to languish, that he may accustom us to persevere. The hastiness of our petitions is a corrupt, yea a hurtful plague; wherefore it is no marvel if God do sometimes correct the same. In the mean season (as I have said) he doth exercise us to be constant in prayer. Therefore, if we will not pray in vain, let us not be wearied with the delay of time. As touching the unity of their minds, it is set against that scattering abroad, which fear had caused before. Yet, notwithstanding, we may easily gather, even by this, how needful a thing it is to pray generally, in that Christ commandeth every one to pray for the whole body, and generally for all men, as it were, in the person of all men: Our Father, Give us this day, &c., (Matth. vi. 9.) Whence cometh this unity of their tongues but from one Spirit? Wherefore, when Paul would prescribe unto the Jews and Gentiles a right form of prayer, he removeth far away all division and dissension. That we may, (saith he,) being all of one mind, with one mouth glorify God, (Rom. xv. 6.) And truly it is needful that we be brethren, and agree together like brethren, that we rightly call God Father.

15. *In those days, Peter standing up in the midst of the disciples, said, (and the company of names together was almost an hundred and twenty,)*

[1] "Ut quotidiana Spiritus augmenta impetremus," that we may obtain daily increase of the Spirit. [2] "Suspensos tenuit," kept them in suspense. [3] "Differt," defer or delay.

16. *Men and brethren, it was expedient that this Scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, which was guide unto them which took Jesus :*

17. *Which was adopted into the number of us, and had obtained part* [lot] *of this ministry.*

18. *And he truly hath* [*had*] *possessed* [or gotten] *a field with the reward of iniquity, and being hanged, he burst in sunder in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out.*

19. *And this was known unto all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that that field is called, in their tongue, Aceldama, that is, The field of blood.*

20. *For it is written in the book of the Psalms, Let his habitation be void, and let there be none to dwell therein, and let another man take his bishoprick.*

21. *Of all those, therefore, which were gathered together with us all that time wherein the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us,*

22. *Beginning from the baptism of John, until that day wherein he was taken up from us, must one be made a witness together with us of his resurrection.*

15. It was meet that Matthias should be chosen into the place of Judas, lest, through the treachery of one man, all that might seem to have been made of none effect which Christ had once appointed. He did not unadvisedly choose the twelve in the beginning, as principal preachers of his gospel. For when he said that they should be judges of twelve tribes of Israel, Luke vi. 13, John vi. 70; he showeth here that it was done of set purpose, that they might gather together the tribes of Israel unto one faith. But after that the Jews had refused the grace offered unto them, it was behoveful that the Israel of God should be gathered together out of all countries.

This, therefore, was, as it were, a holy number, which, if it should have been diminished through the wickedness of Judas, then should the preaching of the gospel both have had, and also have, less credit at this day, if the beginning thereof had been imperfect.[1] Although, therefore, Judas

[1] "Ut ita loquar claudicaret," had been, so to speak, lame, defective.

all heavens, (Eph. i. 22,) because he is above all the world, and hath the chiefest room in that place of blessed immortality, because he is more excellent than all the angels, (Eph. iv. 15.) But this is no let why he may not be absent from us bodily, and that by this word *heavens*, there may not be signified a separation from the world. Let them cavil as much as they will, it is evident that the heaven whereinto Christ was received is opposite to the frame of the world; therefore it doth necessarily follow, that if he be in heaven, he is without [beyond] the world.

But, first, we must mark what the purpose of the angels was, for thereby we shall more perfectly know what the words mean. The angels' intent was to call back the apostles from desiring the carnal presence of Christ. For this purpose was it that they said that he should not come again until he came to judge the world. And to this end serveth the assigning of the time, that they might not look for him in vain before that same time. Who seeth not that in these words is manifestly showed that he was bodily absent out of the world? Who seeth not that we are forbidden to desire to have him upon the earth? But they think they escape safe with that crafty answer, when as they say that then he shall come visibly; but he cometh now invisibly daily. But we are not here to dispute of his form; only the apostles are taught that Christ must abide in heaven until such time as he appear at the latter day. For the desiring of his corporeal presence is here condemned as absurd and perverse. The Papists deny that he is present in the sacrament carnally, while that his glorious body is present with us after a supernatural sort, and by a miracle; but we may well enough reject their inventions concerning his glorious body, as childish and frivolous toys. They feign unto themselves a miracle not confirmed with any testimony of Scripture. The body of Christ was then glorious, when as he was conversant with his disciples after his resurrection. This was done by the extraordinary and secret power of God; yet, notwithstanding, the angels do forbid to desire him afterward after that sort, and they say

that he shall not come unto men in that sort (before the latter day.) Therefore, according to their commandment, let us not go about to pull him out of the heavens with our own inventions; neither let us think that we can handle him with our hands, or perceive him with our other senses, more than we can see him with our eyes. I speak always of his body. For in that they say it is infinite, as it is an absurd dream, so is it safely to be rejected. Nevertheless, I willingly confess that Christ is ascended that he may fulfil [fill] all things; but I say that he is spread abroad everywhere by the power of his Spirit, not by the substance of his flesh. I grant, furthermore, that he is present with us both in his word and in the sacraments. Neither is it to be doubted, but that all those which do with faith receive the signs of his flesh and blood, are made truly partakers of his flesh and blood. But this partaking doth nothing agree with the dotings of the Papists; for they feign that Christ is present in such sort upon the altar as Numa Pompilius did call down his Jupiter Elicitus, or as those witches did fetch down the moon from heaven with their enchantments. But Christ, by reaching us the bread in his Supper, doth will us to lift up our hearts into heaven, that we may have life by his flesh and blood. So that we do not eat his flesh grossly, that we may live thereby, but he poureth into us, by the secret power of his Spirit, his force and strength.

He shall so come. I have said before, that by this consolation all sorrow which we might conceive, because of Christ's absence, is mitigated, yea, utterly taken away, when as we hear that he shall return again. And also the end for which he shall come again is to be noted; namely, that he shall come as a Redeemer, and shall gather us with him into blessed immortality. For as he doth not now sit idle in heaven, (as Homer signifieth, that his gods be busied only about their bellies;) so shall not he appear again without profit. Therefore, the only looking for Christ's coming must both restrain the importunate desires of our flesh, and support our patience in all our adversities; and, lastly, it must refresh our weariness. But it worketh this only in

the faithful, which believe that Christ is their Redeemer; for it bringeth unto the wicked nothing but dread, horror, and great fearfulness. And howsoever they do now scoff and jest when as they hear of his coming, yet shall they be compelled to behold him sitting upon his tribunal-seat, whom now they will not vouchsafe to hear speak. Furthermore, it were but frivolous to move any question about his apparel wherewith he was then clothed, whether he shall come again being clothed with the same or no. Neither am I now determined to refute that which Augustine, in his Epistle unto Consentius, doth touch, (*August. ad Con.* Epist. 146;) notwithstanding, it is better for me to omit that thing which I cannot unfold.

12. *Then they returned unto Jerusalem from the mountain which is called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, being distant about a Sabbath-day's journey.*

13. *And, coming in, they went up into an upper chamber, where abode Peter and James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*

14. *These all abode together with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the wives,* (or women,) *and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

12. That he may pass over unto another history, he showeth that the disciples being returned unto Jerusalem, dwelt together in one parlour. For it was the upper part of the house, which used to be let out unto those which did hire houses;[1] for the most commodious places were reserved unto them that were masters of the house, (for their own use.) Wherefore, by this word Luke doth signify that they were driven into a strait room;[2] and yet, notwithstanding, though this commodity were great, yet they did not part asunder. They might have been more commodiously asunder, yet

[1] "Inquilinis," tenants or lodgers. [2] "In angustum locum fuisse constrictos," were confined to a narrow space.

might they not part company before they had received the Spirit. In that he noteth here the distance of place, it bringeth credit unto the history. Unless, peradventure, he meant hereby to declare that they were not terrified with any fear of danger, but that they did all return and kept company together in one house, which was not so large, but that the company being greater than the place could well contain, it might breed some rumour (or noise.) A Sabbath-day's journey was two miles, and that account doth well agree with the place of John xi. 18, where he saith, "that Jerusalem was distant from Bethany almost fifteen furlongs;" which containeth about a thousand and nine hundred paces. And the mount Olivet was at the side of Bethany. There was no Sabbath-day's journey prescribed in the law; for the Lord doth command them simply to rest upon the Sabbath-day in the law.[1] But because the Jews could not easily be ruled, but that they would run abroad about their business upon the Sabbath-day, (as the Lord himself doth complain, "that they did bear burdens out at the gates,") (Jer. xvii. 24,) therefore, it is to be thought that it was determined by the priests,[2] (to the end they might restrain such enormities,) that no man should travel upon the Sabbath-day above two miles. Although Jerome, in his Answers unto Algasia, doth say that this tradition did come from two Rabbins, namely, from Atriba, and from Simon Heli.

13. *Where they abode.* Some translate it, *where they did abide;* as though they did use to dwell there. But I am of that opinion, that they did then first of all use that hired room to dwell together in, until such time as the Holy Spirit was come upon them. Too, too ridiculous are the Papists, which go about to prove Peter his supremacy[3] hereby, because he is reckoned up first of all the apostles. Although

[1] More properly, For the Lord doth in the law command, &c.

[2] "Communi sacerdotum concilio," by the common council of the priests, the Sanhedrim.

[3] "Primatum," primacy.

we do grant that he was the chiefest of the apostles, yet it doth not follow hereupon that he was the chiefest ruler of all the world. But if he be, therefore, the chief of all the apostles, because his name is first in the catalogue of the apostles' names, I will again conclude, that the mother of Christ was inferior unto all the rest of the women, because she is [here] reckoned the last; which they will in no case admit, as indeed it were a thing too absurd. Wherefore, unless they will set their Papacy to be laughed at of all men, as hitherto they have done, they must leave off to adorn it with such foolish toys. But what is their intent? Forsooth, they will prove out of the Scriptures that there was a secondary head of the Church, inferior to Christ; whereas there is no syllable in the Scripture which is consenting unto this their foolish invention. No marvel is it, therefore, if they do snatch here and there certain places, which, although no man smite them out of their hands, they will let fall of their own accord. But omitting them, let us mark what is Luke's purpose in this place. Because the disciples had fallen away, and filthily fled from their Master Christ, every man whither fear did drive him, (Matth. xxvi. 56,) they did deserve, like forsakers of their masters, or runagates, to be deprived of honour. Therefore, that we may know that by the appointment of the Lord they were gathered together again, and restored to their former degree, Luke reckoneth up all their names.

14. *With their wives.* Some translate it *women;* and they think that he speaketh of those which accompanied Christ. As I will not contend with any man concerning this matter, so have I not doubted to prefer that which I thought was more probable. I grant that the word which Luke useth may be interpreted both ways. But this is my reason, why I do think that he speaketh rather of wives, because, seeing that they used afterward to carry their wives about with them, as Paul doth testify, (1 Cor. ix. 5,) it is not likely that they were then asunder. For they might more easily rest

together in one place, than by wandering to and fro oftentimes to change their abiding; and, secondly, seeing that they did look for the coming of the Holy Ghost, which was even then at hand, what reason was there why they should deprive their wives of so great goodness? Peter's wife was about to be a helper unto him shortly after, which we must also think of the rest of the wives. These women had need of heroical fortitude and constancy, lest they should faint. Who would, therefore, think that they were excluded from their husbands whilst they look for the coming of the Spirit? But if they will stick to the general word, it standeth with reason that there were married women in the company. Howsoever it be, it is Luke's mind to tell us by the way how greatly they had changed their minds.[1] For whereas before the men, being afraid, had fled away, the women are gathered together with them now, neither do they fear any danger. He doth reckon up the mother of Jesus with the other women, whom, notwithstanding, John is said to have kept at his own house. But, as I have said before, they met altogether now only for a short season; for it is not to be doubted but that they departed one from another afterwards. It is well known that amongst the Hebrews all kinsfolk are comprehended under this word *brethren*.

All these did continue. Here he showeth that they did diligently look for the coming of the Holy Spirit. For this was the cause of their prayer, that Christ would send his Spirit, as he had promised. Whereupon we may gather that this is the true faith which stirreth us up to call upon God. For the security of faith doth much differ from sluggishness. Neither doth God, therefore, assure us of this grace, that our minds may straightway become careless, but that he may rather sharpen our desire to pray. Neither is prayer any sign of doubting, but rather a testimony of our (sure hope and) confidence, because we ask those things at the Lord's hands which we know he hath promised. So it becometh us also (after their example) to be instant in prayer,[2]

[1] "In melius," for the better.

[2] "Ut precibus nostris concedat," that he would grant our prayers.

and to beg at God's hands that he will increase in us his Holy Spirit:[1] increase, (I say,) because before we can conceive any prayer we must needs have the first-fruits of the Spirit. For as much as he is the only Master which teacheth us to pray aright, who doth not only give us utterance, (Rom. ii. 25,) but also governs our inward affections.

Furthermore, Luke doth express two things which are proper to true prayer, namely, that they did persist, and that they were all of one mind. This was an exercise of their patience, in that Christ did make them stay a while,[2] when as he could straightway have sent the Holy Spirit; so God doth oftentimes drive off,[3] and, as it were, suffer us to languish, that he may accustom us to persevere. The hastiness of our petitions is a corrupt, yea a hurtful plague; wherefore it is no marvel if God do sometimes correct the same. In the mean season (as I have said) he doth exercise us to be constant in prayer. Therefore, if we will not pray in vain, let us not be wearied with the delay of time. As touching the unity of their minds, it is set against that scattering abroad, which fear had caused before. Yet, notwithstanding, we may easily gather, even by this, how needful a thing it is to pray generally, in that Christ commandeth every one to pray for the whole body, and generally for all men, as it were, in the person of all men: Our Father, Give us this day, &c., (Matth. vi. 9.) Whence cometh this unity of their tongues but from one Spirit? Wherefore, when Paul would prescribe unto the Jews and Gentiles a right form of prayer, he removeth far away all division and dissension. That we may, (saith he,) being all of one mind, with one mouth glorify God, (Rom. xv. 6.) And truly it is needful that we be brethren, and agree together like brethren, that we rightly call God Father.

15. *In those days, Peter standing up in the midst of the disciples, said, (and the company of names together was almost an hundred and twenty,)*

[1] "Ut quotidiana Spiritus augmenta impetremus," that we may obtain daily increase of the Spirit. [2] "Suspensos tenuit," kept them in suspense. [3] "Differt," defer or delay.

16. *Men and brethren, it was expedient that this Scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, which was guide unto them which took Jesus :*

17. *Which was adopted into the number of us, and had obtained part* [lot] *of this ministry.*

18. *And he truly hath* [*had*] *possessed* [or gotten] *a field with the reward of iniquity, and being hanged, he burst in sunder in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out.*

19. *And this was known unto all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that that field is called, in their tongue, Aceldama, that is, The field of blood.*

20. *For it is written in the book of the Psalms, Let his habitation be void, and let there be none to dwell therein, and let another man take his bishoprick.*

21. *Of all those, therefore, which were gathered together with us all that time wherein the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us,*

22. *Beginning from the baptism of John, until that day wherein he was taken up from us, must one be made a witness together with us of his resurrection.*

15. It was meet that Matthias should be chosen into the place of Judas, lest, through the treachery of one man, all that might seem to have been made of none effect which Christ had once appointed. He did not unadvisedly choose the twelve in the beginning, as principal preachers of his gospel. For when he said that they should be judges of twelve tribes of Israel, Luke vi. 13, John vi. 70; he showeth here that it was done of set purpose, that they might gather together the tribes of Israel unto one faith. But after that the Jews had refused the grace offered unto them, it was behoveful that the Israel of God should be gathered together out of all countries.

This, therefore, was, as it were, a holy number, which, if it should have been diminished through the wickedness of Judas, then should the preaching of the gospel both have had, and also have, less credit at this day, if the beginning thereof had been imperfect.[1] Although, therefore, Judas

[1] " Ut ita loquar claudicaret," had been, so to speak, lame, defective.

would (as much as in him lay) have disappointed the purpose of Christ, yet nevertheless it stood firm and stable. He perished as he was worthy, yet did the order of the apostles remain whole and sound.

The company of names. It is uncertain whether he meaneth the men who only have the name properly, seeing the women are comprehended under the name of the men; or whether he taketh names simply for all the heads, as the Hebrews call them souls. This may also be called in question, whether they were wont daily to frequent that parlour in which the apostles did dwell, or they did continually dwell there with them. For the place was scarce able to contain so great a multitude, to serve them for all necessary uses. Surely it seemeth to me a thing more like to be true, that Luke doth in this place express the number of them, that we may know that they were all gathered together when Peter made this sermon. Whereby we may guess that they were not always present there. Although I dare not affirm any certain thing concerning this matter, yet being moved with a probable conjecture, I do rather lean unto this part, that the church was gathered together then, because they had to intreat of a serious matter, and to this end also tendeth this word *rising*, [standing up.]

16. *It was meet that the Scripture should be fulfilled.* Because Peter doth speak in this their assembly, therefore the Papists will have him to be the head of the church.[1] As though no man might speak in any assembly of the godly but he should straightway be Pope. We do grant, that as in every assembly there must be some which must be chief, so in this assembly the apostles did ascribe this honour unto Peter. But what maketh this unto (the proving of) their Papacy? Wherefore, bidding them adieu,[2] let us consider what the Spirit doth speak by the mouth of Peter. He saith, That the Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, lest any man's mind should be troubled with that horrible fall of

[1] "Universæ Ecclesiæ," the Universal Church. [2] "Illis valere Jussis," omitting these things.

Judas. For it [illegible] chosen by Christ [illegible] filthily fall in the [illegible] this stone of [illegible] by the Scripture. [illegible] very necessary [illegible] attribute this [illegible] that they are able to [illegible] the sudden event of things. For there is nothing which doth more trouble us than when we stay still in our own sense and understanding, and procure unto ourselves lets and doubts,[1] which the Lord would be ready to cure, if so be that we would hold fast this one thing, that nothing is absurd which he hath foreseen, appointed, and foretold, that he might make us more strong. Neither was Judas therefore excusable, because that which befel him was foretold, seeing that he fell away, not being compelled by the prophecy, but only by the malice of his own heart. The oration of Peter hath two parts. For, in the first place, he putteth away the offence which godly minds might have conceived by reason of the fall of Judas: whence also he gathereth an exhortation, that the rest may learn to fear God. Secondly, he telleth them that it remaineth that they choose another into his place, both which he proveth by testimony of Scripture.

Which the Holy Ghost foretold. Such manner of speeches bring greater reverence to the Scriptures, whilst we are taught by them that David and all the rest of the prophets did speak only as they were directed by the Holy Ghost; so that they themselves were not the authors of their prophecies, but the Spirit which used their tongues as an instrument. Wherefore, seeing that our dulness is so great, that we ascribe less authority unto the Scriptures than we ought, we must diligently note such manner of speeches, and acquaint ourselves with them, that we may oftentimes remember the authority of God to confirm our faith withal.

[1] "Offendicula," small scandals.

17. *Adopted.* It is word for word *reckoned.* And he saith that he was one of the number, that he might signify unto them that it was needful that the empty place should be filled, to the end that the number might continue whole. And to this purpose serveth that which followeth, that he had obtained a part in the ministry. For thereupon it doth follow that the body should be, as it were, lame, if that part should be wanting. Surely it was a thing which might make them greatly amazed, that he whom Christ had extolled unto so high dignity should fall headlong into such destruction. Which circumstance doth increase the cruelty of the fact,[1] and teacheth the rest to take heed unto themselves.[2] Neither is it to be doubted but that the disciples did remember Judas with great grief and sorrow. But Peter doth here express by name the excellency of his function, that he might make them more attentive and more careful to provide a remedy.

18. *And he truly.* It seemeth unto me a thing like to be true, that this narration of the death of Judas was put in by Luke; therefore, it seemeth good to me to include it within a parenthesis, that it may be separated from Peter's sermon. For to what end should Peter here reckon up unto the disciples those things which they already knew well enough?

Secondly, it should have been an absurd thing to have spoken after this among them, that the field which was bought with the money that was given to betray Christ was called of the Hebrews, in their own mother tongue, *Aceldama.* But whereas some do answer, that Peter spoke this unto the Galileans, whose speech did disagree with the Jewish tongue, it is but vain and frivolous. In very deed they did somewhat disagree in pronunciation; yet not so much but that they did well understand one another; like as do these of Paris and the men of Rouen.

Furthermore, how could this be a fit word for Jerusalem, where Peter made his sermon? To what end should he in-

[1] "Atrocitatem sceleris," the atrocity of the crime. [2] "Ut sibi caveant et metuant," to be cautious and fear.

terpret in Greek among the Hebrews their own mother tongue? Therefore doth Luke of himself put in this sentence concerning the death of Judas, lest Peter's words might seem strange[1] through ignorance of that history.

He possessed a field. This word hath a double signification, which, in my opinion, doth rather signify in this place to possess than to get; yet because it skilleth little whether way we read it, I leave it indifferent. And he speaketh after this sort, not because Judas had the use of the field, or that he himself did buy it, seeing it was bought after his death. But Luke's meaning was, that his burial was the perpetual note of ignominy; was the reward which he had for his falsehood and wicked act. Neither did he so much sell Christ for thirty pieces as his apostleship. He enjoyed not the money;[2] he only possessed the field. Furthermore, it came to pass through the marvellous providence of God, that the very common name of the field should be a note of infamy for the priests, which had bought (the) innocent blood of [from] the traitor. He saith that the Hebrews did call it by that name in their tongue, because he himself was a Grecian born; and he calleth that the Hebrew tongue which the Jews did use after the captivity of Babylon, namely, such as was mixed of the Assyrian tongue and of the Chaldean tongue.

It is written in the book of Psalms. He taketh away, by authority of Scriptures, all offence which might have happened by reason of the falling away of Judas. Yet might this place seem to be greatly wrested: First, in that David did not wish that these things might befal any particular person, but (in the plural number) he wisheth them unto his enemies. Secondly, it seemeth that Peter doth apply these things amiss unto Judas, which were spoken of the enemies of David. I answer, that David doth there speak after this [afterwards] of himself, that he may describe the condition and state of Christ's kingdom.

In that Psalm (I say) is contained the common image of

[1] "Lectoribus obscura essent," might be obscure to his readers.
[2] "Argento potitus non est," he did not obtain the money.

those which held opinion, that Christ should reign as a king in this world a thousand years[1] fell into the like folly. Hereupon, also, they applied all such prophecies as did describe the kingdom of Christ figuratively by the similitude of earthly kingdoms unto the commodity of their flesh; whereas, notwithstanding, it was God's purpose to lift up their minds higher. As for us, let us learn to apply our minds to hear the gospel preached, lest we be entangled in like errors, which prepareth a place in our hearts for the kingdom of Christ.[2]

In all Judea. Here he showeth, first, that they must not work for the space of one day only, while that he assigneth the whole world unto them, in which they must publish the doctrine of the gospel. Furthermore, he refuteth[3] the opinion which they had conceived of Israel. They supposed those to be Israelites only which were of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. Christ testifieth that they must gather thereunto all Samaria; which, although they were nigh in situation, yet were they far distant in mind and heart. He showeth that all other regions far distant, and also profane, must be united unto the holy people, that they may be all partakers of one and the same grace. It is evident (John iv. 9) how greatly the Jews did detest the Samaritans. Christ commanded that (the wall of separation being broken down) they be both made one body, (Eph. ii. 14,) that his kingdom may be erected everywhere. By naming Judea and Jerusalem, which the apostles had tried[4] to be full of most deadly enemies, he foretelleth them of the great business and trouble which was prepared for them, that he may cause them to cease to think upon this triumph which they hoped to have been so nigh at hand.[5] Neither could they be a little afraid to come before so cruel enemies, more to inflame

[1] "Chiliastas," the Chiliasts. [2] Transpose thus: As for us, lest we be entangled in like errors, let us learn to apply our minds to hear the gospel preached, (a preached gospel,) which prepareth a place in our heart for the kingdom of Christ. [3] "Oblique refutat," indirectly refuteth. [4] "Experti sunt," experienced. [5] "Ut de propinquo triumpho cogitare desinant," that they may cease to think of a near triumph.

hath determined with himself to perform, and will also promise unto us. But whereas Peter doth cite out of the Scriptures two diverse testimonies; by the first is meant, that Judas, together with his name and family, should quite be extinguished, that his place might be empty; the other, which he fetcheth out of the 109th Psalm, tendeth to this end, that there should be another chosen to supply his place. These seem at first to be contrary; namely, a waste habitation and succession. Yet, because the Spirit saith only, in the former place, that the adversaries of the Church should be taken away, that their place might be empty, and without one to dwell therein, in respect of themselves, this is no let why another may not afterward supply their empty place. Yea, this doth also augment their punishment, in that the honour, after it was taken from him that was unworthy thereof, is given to another.

And his bishoprick. The Hebrew word could not be translated more fitly. For פְּקוּדָה (*pecudah*) doth signify a jurisdiction or government, so called of the overseeing and beholding of things. For as for those which interpret it *wife*, the text[1] refuteth them; for it followeth in the next verse, of his wife, that she may be made a widow. Therefore, after that he had wished that the wicked may be deprived of his life, he addeth, moreover, that he may be spoiled of his honour; neither doth he stay here, but also he desireth that another may succeed him, whereby, as I have said before, his punishment is doubled. In the meanwhile, he noteth by the way,[2] that this false, treacherous, and wicked person, whereof he speaketh, should not be some one of the common sort, but such an one as should be indued with honour and dignity; from which, nevertheless, he shall fall. And out of this place must we learn, that the wicked shall not escape scot free, which have persecuted the Church of God; for this miserable and wretched end is prepared for them all.

21. *We must, therefore.* This which he bringeth in might

[1] "Contextus," context. [2] "Oblique," indirectly.

the whole Church, which is the body of the Son of God. Therefore, the things which are there set down must needs have been fulfilled in the head, which are indeed fulfilled, as the evangelists do testify. Now, if any man object that those things which there were spoken against the enemies of David do not fitly agree unto Judas, we may easily gather that they do so much the rather agree with him, because David doth not respect himself as being separated from the body of the Church; but rather as he was one of the members of Christ, and so taking upon him his image, he steppeth forth in his name.

Whosoever shall mark that this singular person was attributed to David, that he should be a figure of Christ, will not marvel if all these things be applied unto him which were prefigured in David. Although, therefore, he doth comprehend the whole Church, yet he beginneth at the head thereof, and doth especially describe what things Christ should suffer by the hands of the wicked. For we learn out of Paul's doctrine, that whatsoever afflictions the godly suffer, they are part of the afflictions of Christ, and serve to the fulfilling of the same, (Col. i. 14.) This order and connection did David observe, or rather the Spirit of God, who meant by the mouth of David to instruct the whole Church. But as touching the persecutors of Christ, all that which is commonly spoken of them is by good right referred unto their standard-bearer; whose impiety and wickedness, as it is most famous, so his punishment ought to be made known unto all men. If any man do object again, that that which is recited in the Psalm is only certain cursings, and not prophecies; and that, therefore, Peter doth gather improperly that it was of necessity that it should be fulfilled, it is soon answered. For David was not moved with any perverse or corrupt affection of the flesh to crave vengeance; but he had the Holy Spirit to be his guide and director. Therefore, what things soever he prayed for there, being inspired with the Holy Ghost, they have the same strength which prophecies have, because the Spirit doth require no other thing than that which God

hath determined with himself to perform, and will also promise unto us. But whereas Peter doth cite out of the Scriptures two diverse testimonies; by the first is meant, that Judas, together with his name and family, should quite be extinguished, that his place might be empty; the other, which he fetcheth out of the 109th Psalm, tendeth to this end, that there should be another chosen to supply his place. These seem at first to be contrary; namely, a waste habitation and succession. Yet, because the Spirit saith only, in the former place, that the adversaries of the Church should be taken away, that their place might be empty, and without one to dwell therein, in respect of themselves, this is no let why another may not afterward supply their empty place. Yea, this doth also augment their punishment, in that the honour, after it was taken from him that was unworthy thereof, is given to another.

And his bishoprick. The Hebrew word could not be translated more fitly. For פְּקֻדָּה (*pecudah*) doth signify a jurisdiction or government, so called of the overseeing and beholding of things. For as for those which interpret it *wife*, the text[1] refuteth them; for it followeth in the next verse, of his wife, that she may be made a widow. Therefore, after that he had wished that the wicked may be deprived of his life, he addeth, moreover, that he may be spoiled of his honour; neither doth he stay here, but also he desireth that another may succeed him, whereby, as I have said before, his punishment is doubled. In the meanwhile, he noteth by the way,[2] that this false, treacherous, and wicked person, whereof he speaketh, should not be some one of the common sort, but such an one as should be indued with honour and dignity; from which, nevertheless, he shall fall. And out of this place must we learn, that the wicked shall not escape scot free, which have persecuted the Church of God; for this miserable and wretched end is prepared for them all.

21. *We must, therefore.* This which he bringeth in might

[1] "Contextus," context. [2] "Oblique," indirectly.

seem, at the first sight, to be far set, [fetched.] For if so be it David did speak of transposing[1] Judas's bishoprick, it did not thereupon straightway follow that the disciples should choose another to be his successor; yet, because they knew that they had this charge given them to order the Church, so soon as Peter had told them that it did please the Lord that it should be so, he gathereth thereupon that they ought to do it. For whensoever God will use as means[2] to maintain the government of his Church, so soon as we know what his will is, we must not linger, but stoutly perform whatsoever is required in our ministry (and function.) That was, without all controversy, what was the duty of the Church; like as, at this day, when we hear that those must be put from their office which behave themselves ungodly and wickedly, and that others must be chosen in their rooms, the Church must take this charge in hand. Wherefore, it was superfluous to move any question about a thing that was not to be doubted of. Therefore, let us always remember to consider what we have to do, that we may be ready to obey the Lord. Furthermore, when as he intreateth of the making of an apostle, he saith, He must be a witness of the resurrection; which signifieth that the apostleship is not without the preaching of the gospel. Whence it may appear how vain and frivolous the Popish bishops are, which having on only dumb visors, brag that they are the successors of the apostles; but wherein are they like unto them? I grant that Peter doth here require such a witness as saw the Lord after his resurrection, of which sort John professeth himself to be one, when he saith, "He which saw it beareth witness," (John xix. 35.) For this did serve for the confirmation of faith; yet, nevertheless, Peter maketh it a thing necessary in him and the rest of his fellows in office, that they should teach, whilst he maketh them and himself preachers or witnesses of the resurrection.

He nameth the resurrection, not because they must bear

[1] "Transferendo," transferring. [2] "Quum opera nostra uti velit Deus," since God is pleased to use our agency.

witness thereof alone; but because, first, under this is comprehended the preaching of the death of Christ; secondly, because we have the end of our redemption therein, and the accomplishment thereof, and also it bringeth with it the celestial government of Christ, and the power of the Spirit in defending his, in establishing justice and equity, in restoring order, in abolishing the tyranny of sin, and in putting to flight all the enemies of the Church. Let us know, therefore, that those things are not excluded by this word which are necessarily knit together. Nevertheless, let us note that the resurrection is here named before other things, as being the chief point of the gospel, as also Paul teacheth, (1 Cor. xv. 17.)

But were the apostles alone witnesses of the resurrection? Was not this also common to the rest of the disciples? For Peter seemeth to challenge this as proper only to the apostles. I answer, that this title is therefore attributed unto them, because they were chosen peculiarly unto that function, and because they had the chief room amongst those which did bring this embassage; therefore, though they were the chief of those which were assigned, yet were not they only appointed thereunto.

All that time. He beginneth at that time when Jesus began to show himself unto the world, which is diligently to be observed, as before I have said; for he lived privately until such time as he was almost thirty years of age. For he would not make himself known further than was needful for our salvation. Therefore, when the time was come wherein he must go about that business which his Father had appointed him, he came abroad like a new man, and one that was but lately born. Every man may easily perceive what great force this hath to bridle our curiosity. The whole life of Christ might have been a mirror most marvellous,[1] of more than absolute perfection; and yet, notwithstanding, that he might keep us occupied in the study and meditation of those things which were most needful to be known, he would lead the better part of his life obscurely

[1] "Admirabile speculum," an admirable mirror.

those which held opinion, that Christ should reign as a king in this world a thousand years[1] fell into the like folly. Hereupon, also, they applied all such prophecies as did describe the kingdom of Christ figuratively by the similitude of earthly kingdoms unto the commodity of their flesh; whereas, notwithstanding, it was God's purpose to lift up their minds higher. As for us, let us learn to apply our minds to hear the gospel preached, lest we be entangled in like errors, which prepareth a place in our hearts for the kingdom of Christ.[2]

In all Judea. Here he showeth, first, that they must not work for the space of one day only, while that he assigneth the whole world unto them, in which they must publish the doctrine of the gospel. Furthermore, he refuteth[3] the opinion which they had conceived of Israel. They supposed those to be Israelites only which were of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. Christ testifieth that they must gather thereunto all Samaria; which, although they were nigh in situation, yet were they far distant in mind and heart. He showeth that all other regions far distant, and also profane, must be united unto the holy people, that they may be all partakers of one and the same grace. It is evident (John iv. 9) how greatly the Jews did detest the Samaritans. Christ commanded that (the wall of separation being broken down) they be both made one body, (Eph. ii. 14,) that his kingdom may be erected everywhere. By naming Judea and Jerusalem, which the apostles had tried[4] to be full of most deadly enemies, he foretelleth them of the great business and trouble which was prepared for them, that he may cause them to cease to think upon this triumph which they hoped to have been so nigh at hand.[5] Neither could they be a little afraid to come before so cruel enemies, more to inflame

[1] "Chiliastas," the Chiliasts. [2] Transpose thus: As for us, lest we be entangled in like errors, let us learn to apply our minds to hear the gospel preached, (a preached gospel,) which prepareth a place in our heart for the kingdom of Christ. [3] "Oblique refutat," indirectly refuteth. [4] "Experti sunt," experienced. [5] "Ut de propinquo triumpho cogitare desinant," that they may cease to think of a near triumph.

their rage and fury. And here we see how he giveth the former place unto the Jews, because they are, as it were, the first-begotten, (Exod. iv. 22.) Notwithstanding, he calleth those Gentiles one with another, which were before strangers from the hope of salvation, (Eph. ii. 11.) Hereby we learn, that the gospel was preached everywhere by the manifest commandment of Christ, that it might also come unto us.

9. *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up on high, and a cloud received him out of their sight.*
10. *And while they looked up stedfastly into heaven, as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,*
11. *Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him go into heaven.*

9. The readers may learn out of our Institutions what profit we reap by the ascension of Christ. Notwithstanding, because it is one of the chiefest points of our faith, therefore doth Luke endeavour more diligently to prove the same; yea, rather, the Lord himself meant to put the same out of all doubt, when as he hath ascended so manifestly, and hath confirmed the certainty of the same by other circumstances. For, if so be it he had vanished away secretly, then might the disciples have doubted what was become of him;[1] but now, sith that they, being in so plain a place,[2] saw him taken up with whom they had been conversant, whom also they heard speak even now, whom they beheld with their eyes, whom also they see taken out of their sight by a cloud, there is no cause why they should doubt whither he was gone. Furthermore, the angels are there also to bear witness of the same. And it was needful that the history should have been set down so diligently for our cause, that we may know

[1] "Hæsissent attoniti," might have stood astonished. [2] "Quam in edito et undique experto ac patente loco et constituti," when they were standing on an elevated spot, open on all sides, with nothing to interrupt the view.

assuredly, that although the Son of God appear nowhere upon earth, yet doth he live in the heavens. And this seemeth to be the reason why the cloud did overshadow him, before such time as he did enter into his celestial glory; that his disciples being content with their measure[1] might cease to inquire any further. And we are taught by them that our mind is not able to ascend so high as to take a full view of the glory of Christ; therefore, let this cloud be a mean to restrain our boldness, as was the smoke which was continually before the door of the tabernacle in the time of the law.

10. *Two men.* He calleth them so by reason of their form. For although it might be that they had the bodies of men in deed, concerning which thing I will not greatly stand in defence of either part, yet certain it is they were not men; but because this *metonymia* is commonly used in the Scriptures, especially in the First Book of Moses, I will not greatly stand thereupon. Their *white garments* were a token of rare and excellent dignity. For God meant by this, as by an evident token to distinguish them from the common sort of people, that the disciples might give better ear unto them;[2] and that at this day we also may know that this vision was showed them of God.

11. *Ye men of Galilee, &c.* I am not of their opinion who think that this name was given the apostles after an opprobrious sort, as if the angels meant to reprehend the slowness and dulness of the apostles. In my opinion, it was rather to make them more attentive, in that men, whom they did never see before, did name them as though they had perfectly known them. But they seem to reprehend without cause, for looking up into heaven. For where should they rather seek for Christ than in heaven? Doth

[1] "Modulo," little measure.

[2] "Ad eorum dicta attentiores," might be more attentive to what they said.

not the Scriptures also oftentimes exhort us thereunto? I answer, that they were not reprehended because they looked up towards heaven; but because they coveted to see Christ, when as the cloud which was put between them and him did keep them from seeing him with their bodily senses: Secondly, because they hoped that he would return again straightway, that they might enjoy the sight of him again, when as he did ascend to stay in the heavens until such time as he should come[1] to judge the world. Wherefore, let us first learn out of this place that we must not seek Christ either in heaven, either upon earth, otherwise than by faith; and also, that we must not desire to have him present with us bodily in the world; for he that doth[2] either of those two shall oftentimes go farther from him. So this their admiration is reprehended, not simply, but inasmuch as they were astonied by the strangeness of this matter; like as we are oftentimes carried unadvisedly into a wonderful great wondering at God's works; but we never apply ourselves to consider for what end and purpose they were done.

Jesus, which is taken up into heaven. There are two members in this one sentence. The first is, that Christ was taken up into heaven, that they may not henceforth foolishly desire to have him any longer conversant with them upon earth. The other is straightway added as a consolation concerning his second coming. Out of these two jointly, and also severally, is gathered a firm, stable, and strong argument, to refute the Papists, and all other which imagine that Christ is really present in the signs of bread and wine. For when it is said that Christ is taken up into heaven; here is plainly noted the distance of place. I grant that this word *heaven* is interpreted divers ways, sometimes for the air, sometimes for the whole connection[3] of the spheres, sometimes for the glorious kingdom of God, where the majesty of God hath his [its] proper seat, howsoever it doth fill the whole world. After which sort Paul doth place Christ above

[1] "Secundo," a second time, omitted.
[2] "Hærebit," shall cling to.
[3] "Complexa," system.

all heavens, (Eph. i. 22,) because he is above all the world, and hath the chiefest room in that place of blessed immortality, because he is more excellent than all the angels, (Eph. iv. 15.) But this is no let why he may not be absent from us bodily, and that by this word *heavens*, there may not be signified a separation from the world. Let them cavil as much as they will, it is evident that the heaven whereinto Christ was received is opposite to the frame of the world; therefore it doth necessarily follow, that if he be in heaven, he is without [beyond] the world.

But, first, we must mark what the purpose of the angels was, for thereby we shall more perfectly know what the words mean. The angels' intent was to call back the apostles from desiring the carnal presence of Christ. For this purpose was it that they said that he should not come again until he came to judge the world. And to this end serveth the assigning of the time, that they might not look for him in vain before that same time. Who seeth not that in these words is manifestly showed that he was bodily absent out of the world? Who seeth not that we are forbidden to desire to have him upon the earth? But they think they escape safe with that crafty answer, when as they say that then he shall come visibly; but he cometh now invisibly daily. But we are not here to dispute of his form; only the apostles are taught that Christ must abide in heaven until such time as he appear at the latter day. For the desiring of his corporeal presence is here condemned as absurd and perverse. The Papists deny that he is present in the sacrament carnally, while that his glorious body is present with us after a supernatural sort, and by a miracle; but we may well enough reject their inventions concerning his glorious body, as childish and frivolous toys. They feign unto themselves a miracle not confirmed with any testimony of Scripture. The body of Christ was then glorious, when as he was conversant with his disciples after his resurrection. This was done by the extraordinary and secret power of God; yet, notwithstanding, the angels do forbid to desire him afterward after that sort, and they say

that he shall not come unto men in that sort (before the latter day.) Therefore, according to their commandment, let us not go about to pull him out of the heavens with our own inventions; neither let us think that we can handle him with our hands, or perceive him with our other senses, more than we can see him with our eyes. I speak always of his body. For in that they say it is infinite, as it is an absurd dream, so is it safely to be rejected. Nevertheless, I willingly confess that Christ is ascended that he may fulfil [fill] all things; but I say that he is spread abroad everywhere by the power of his Spirit, not by the substance of his flesh. I grant, furthermore, that he is present with us both in his word and in the sacraments. Neither is it to be doubted, but that all those which do with faith receive the signs of his flesh and blood, are made truly partakers of his flesh and blood. But this partaking doth nothing agree with the dotings of the Papists; for they feign that Christ is present in such sort upon the altar as Numa Pompilius did call down his Jupiter Elicitus, or as those witches did fetch down the moon from heaven with their enchantments. But Christ, by reaching us the bread in his Supper, doth will us to lift up our hearts into heaven, that we may have life by his flesh and blood. So that we do not eat his flesh grossly, that we may live thereby, but he poureth into us, by the secret power of his Spirit, his force and strength.

He shall so come. I have said before, that by this consolation all sorrow which we might conceive, because of Christ's absence, is mitigated, yea, utterly taken away, when as we hear that he shall return again. And also the end for which he shall come again is to be noted; namely, that he shall come as a Redeemer, and shall gather us with him into blessed immortality. For as he doth not now sit idle in heaven, (as Homer signifieth, that his gods be busied only about their bellies;) so shall not he appear again without profit. Therefore, the only looking for Christ's coming must both restrain the importunate desires of our flesh, and support our patience in all our adversities; and, lastly, it must refresh our weariness. But it worketh this only in

the faithful, which believe that Christ is their Redeemer; for it bringeth unto the wicked nothing but dread, horror, and great fearfulness. And howsoever they do now scoff and jest when as they hear of his coming, yet shall they be compelled to behold him sitting upon his tribunal-seat, whom now they will not vouchsafe to hear speak. Furthermore, it were but frivolous to move any question about his apparel wherewith he was then clothed, whether he shall come again being clothed with the same or no. Neither am I now determined to refute that which Augustine, in his Epistle unto Consentius, doth touch, (*August. ad Con.* Epist. 146;) notwithstanding, it is better for me to omit that thing which I cannot unfold.

12. *Then they returned unto Jerusalem from the mountain which is called Olivet, which is nigh unto Jerusalem, being distant about a Sabbath-day's journey.*

13. *And, coming in, they went up into an upper chamber, where abode Peter and James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.*

14. *These all abode together with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the wives,* (or women,) *and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*

12. That he may pass over unto another history, he showeth that the disciples being returned unto Jerusalem, dwelt together in one parlour. For it was the upper part of the house, which used to be let out unto those which did hire houses;[1] for the most commodious places were reserved unto them that were masters of the house, (for their own use.) Wherefore, by this word Luke doth signify that they were driven into a strait room;[2] and yet, notwithstanding, though this commodity were great, yet they did not part asunder. They might have been more commodiously asunder, yet

[1] "Inquilinis," tenants or lodgers. [2] "In angustum locum fuisse constrictos," were confined to a narrow space.

not the Scriptures also oftentimes exhort us thereunto? I answer, that they were not reprehended because they looked up towards heaven; but because they coveted to see Christ, when as the cloud which was put between them and him did keep them from seeing him with their bodily senses: Secondly, because they hoped that he would return again straightway, that they might enjoy the sight of him again, when as he did ascend to stay in the heavens until such time as he should come[1] to judge the world. Wherefore, let us first learn out of this place that we must not seek Christ either in heaven, either upon earth, otherwise than by faith; and also, that we must not desire to have him present with us bodily in the world; for he that doth[2] either of those two shall oftentimes go farther from him. So this their admiration is reprehended, not simply, but inasmuch as they were astonied by the strangeness of this matter; like as we are oftentimes carried unadvisedly into a wonderful great wondering at God's works; but we never apply ourselves to consider for what end and purpose they were done.

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2 "Hærebit," shall cling to.
3 "Complexa," system.

we do grant that he was the chiefest of the apostles, yet it doth not follow hereupon that he was the chiefest ruler of all the world. But if he be, therefore, the chief of all the apostles, because his name is first in the catalogue of the apostles' names, I will again conclude, that the mother of Christ was inferior unto all the rest of the women, because she is [here] reckoned the last; which they will in no case admit, as indeed it were a thing too absurd. Wherefore, unless they will set their Papacy to be laughed at of all men, as hitherto they have done, they must leave off to adorn it with such foolish toys. But what is their intent? Forsooth, they will prove out of the Scriptures that there was a secondary head of the Church, inferior to Christ; whereas there is no syllable in the Scripture which is consenting unto this their foolish invention. No marvel is it, therefore, if they do snatch here and there certain places, which, although no man smite them out of their hands, they will let fall of their own accord. But omitting them, let us mark what is Luke's purpose in this place. Because the disciples had fallen away, and filthily fled from their Master Christ, every man whither fear did drive him, (Matth. xxvi. 56,) they did deserve, like forsakers of their masters, or runagates, to be deprived of honour. Therefore, that we may know that by the appointment of the Lord they were gathered together again, and restored to their former degree, Luke reckoneth up all their names.

14. *With their wives.* Some translate it *women;* and they think that he speaketh of those which accompanied Christ. As I will not contend with any man concerning this matter, so have I not doubted to prefer that which I thought was more probable. I grant that the word which Luke useth may be interpreted both ways. But this is my reason, why I do think that he speaketh rather of wives, because, seeing that they used afterward to carry their wives about with them, as Paul doth testify, (1 Cor. ix. 5,) it is not likely that they were then asunder. For they might more easily rest

together in one place, than by wandering to and fro oftentimes to change their abiding; and, secondly, seeing that they did look for the coming of the Holy Ghost, which was even then at hand, what reason was there why they should deprive their wives of so great goodness? Peter's wife was about to be a helper unto him shortly after, which we must also think of the rest of the wives. These women had need of heroical fortitude and constancy, lest they should faint. Who would, therefore, think that they were excluded from their husbands whilst they look for the coming of the Spirit? But if they will stick to the general word, it standeth with reason that there were married women in the company. Howsoever it be, it is Luke's mind to tell us by the way how greatly they had changed their minds.[1] For whereas before the men, being afraid, had fled away, the women are gathered together with them now, neither do they fear any danger. He doth reckon up the mother of Jesus with the other women, whom, notwithstanding, John is said to have kept at his own house. But, as I have said before, they met altogether now only for a short season; for it is not to be doubted but that they departed one from another afterwards. It is well known that amongst the Hebrews all kinsfolk are comprehended under this word *brethren*.

All these did continue. Here he showeth that they did diligently look for the coming of the Holy Spirit. For this was the cause of their prayer, that Christ would send his Spirit, as he had promised. Whereupon we may gather that this is the true faith which stirreth us up to call upon God. For the security of faith doth much differ from sluggishness. Neither doth God, therefore, assure us of this grace, that our minds may straightway become careless, but that he may rather sharpen our desire to pray. Neither is prayer any sign of doubting, but rather a testimony of our (sure hope and) confidence, because we ask those things at the Lord's hands which we know he hath promised. So it becometh us also (after their example) to be instant in prayer,[2]

[1] "In melius," for the better.

[2] "Ut precibus nostris concedat," that he would grant our prayers.

and to beg at God's hands that he will increase in us his Holy Spirit:[1] increase, (I say,) because before we can conceive any prayer we must needs have the first-fruits of the Spirit. For as much as he is the only Master which teacheth us to pray aright, who doth not only give us utterance, (Rom. ii. 25,) but also governs our inward affections.

Furthermore, Luke doth express two things which are proper to true prayer, namely, that they did persist, and that they were all of one mind. This was an exercise of their patience, in that Christ did make them stay a while,[2] when as he could straightway have sent the Holy Spirit; so God doth oftentimes drive off,[3] and, as it were, suffer us to languish, that he may accustom us to persevere. The hastiness of our petitions is a corrupt, yea a hurtful plague; wherefore it is no marvel if God do sometimes correct the same. In the mean season (as I have said) he doth exercise us to be constant in prayer. Therefore, if we will not pray in vain, let us not be wearied with the delay of time. As touching the unity of their minds, it is set against that scattering abroad, which fear had caused before. Yet, notwithstanding, we may easily gather, even by this, how needful a thing it is to pray generally, in that Christ commandeth every one to pray for the whole body, and generally for all men, as it were, in the person of all men: Our Father, Give us this day, &c., (Matth. vi. 9.) Whence cometh this unity of their tongues but from one Spirit? Wherefore, when Paul would prescribe unto the Jews and Gentiles a right form of prayer, he removeth far away all division and dissension. That we may, (saith he,) being all of one mind, with one mouth glorify God, (Rom. xv. 6.) And truly it is needful that we be brethren, and agree together like brethren, that we rightly call God Father.

15. *In those days, Peter standing up in the midst of the disciples, said, (and the company of names together was almost an hundred and twenty,)*

[1] "Ut quotidiana Spiritus augmenta impetremus," that we may obtain daily increase of the Spirit. [2] "Suspensos tenuit," kept them in suspense. [3] "Differt," defer or delay.

16. *Men and brethren, it was expedient that this Scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, which was guide unto them which took Jesus :*

17. *Which was adopted into the number of us, and had obtained part* [lot] *of this ministry.*

18. *And he truly hath* [*had*] *possessed* [or gotten] *a field with the reward of iniquity, and being hanged, he burst in sunder in the middle, and all his bowels gushed out.*

19. *And this was known unto all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that that field is called, in their tongue, Aceldama, that is, The field of blood.*

20. *For it is written in the book of the Psalms, Let his habitation be void, and let there be none to dwell therein, and let another man take his bishoprick.*

21. *Of all those, therefore, which were gathered together with us all that time wherein the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us,*

22. *Beginning from the baptism of John, until that day wherein he was taken up from us, must one be made a witness together with us of his resurrection.*

15. It was meet that Matthias should be chosen into the place of Judas, lest, through the treachery of one man, all that might seem to have been made of none effect which Christ had once appointed. He did not unadvisedly choose the twelve in the beginning, as principal preachers of his gospel. For when he said that they should be judges of twelve tribes of Israel, Luke vi. 13, John vi. 70; he showeth here that it was done of set purpose, that they might gather together the tribes of Israel unto one faith. But after that the Jews had refused the grace offered unto them, it was behoveful that the Israel of God should be gathered together out of all countries.

This, therefore, was, as it were, a holy number, which, if it should have been diminished through the wickedness of Judas, then should the preaching of the gospel both have had, and also have, less credit at this day, if the beginning thereof had been imperfect.[1] Although, therefore, Judas

[1] " Ut ita loquar claudicaret," had been, so to speak, lame, defective.

would (as much as in him lay) have disappointed the purpose of Christ, yet nevertheless it stood firm and stable. He perished as he was worthy, yet did the order of the apostles remain whole and sound.

The company of names. It is uncertain whether he meaneth the men who only have the name properly, seeing the women are comprehended under the name of the men; or whether he taketh names simply for all the heads, as the Hebrews call them souls. This may also be called in question, whether they were wont daily to frequent that parlour in which the apostles did dwell, or they did continually dwell there with them. For the place was scarce able to contain so great a multitude, to serve them for all necessary uses. Surely it seemeth to me a thing more like to be true, that Luke doth in this place express the number of them, that we may know that they were all gathered together when Peter made this sermon. Whereby we may guess that they were not always present there. Although I dare not affirm any certain thing concerning this matter, yet being moved with a probable conjecture, I do rather lean unto this part, that the church was gathered together then, because they had to intreat of a serious matter, and to this end also tendeth this word *rising*, [standing up.]

16. *It was meet that the Scripture should be fulfilled.* Because Peter doth speak in this their assembly, therefore the Papists will have him to be the head of the church.[1] As though no man might speak in any assembly of the godly but he should straightway be Pope. We do grant, that as in every assembly there must be some which must be chief, so in this assembly the apostles did ascribe this honour unto Peter. But what maketh this unto (the proving of) their Papacy? Wherefore, bidding them adieu,[2] let us consider what the Spirit doth speak by the mouth of Peter. He saith, That the Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, lest any man's mind should be troubled with that horrible fall of

[1] "Universæ Ecclesiæ," the Universal Church.

[2] "Illis valere Jussis," omitting these things.

Judas. For it seemed a strange thing that he which was chosen by Christ unto so excellent a function, should so filthily fall in the beginning of his course. Peter removeth this stone of stumbling, when he saith that it was foretold by the Scripture. Whence we may gather an admonition very necessary for daily practice; namely, that we ought to attribute this honour unto the prophecies of the Scriptures, that they are able to appease all such fear as we conceive of the sudden event of things. For there is nothing which doth more trouble us than when we stay still in our own sense and understanding, and procure unto ourselves lets and doubts,[1] which the Lord would be ready to cure, if so be that we would hold fast this one thing, that nothing is absurd which he hath foreseen, appointed, and foretold, that he might make us more strong. Neither was Judas therefore excusable, because that which befel him was foretold, seeing that he fell away, not being compelled by the prophecy, but only by the malice of his own heart. The oration of Peter hath two parts. For, in the first place, he putteth away the offence which godly minds might have conceived by reason of the fall of Judas; whence also he gathereth an exhortation, that the rest may learn to fear God. Secondly, he telleth them that it remaineth that they choose another into his place, both which he proveth by testimony of Scripture.

Which the Holy Ghost foretold. Such manner of speeches bring greater reverence to the Scriptures, whilst we are taught by them that David and all the rest of the prophets did speak only as they were directed by the Holy Ghost; so that they themselves were not the authors of their prophecies, but the Spirit which used their tongues as an instrument. Wherefore, seeing that our dulness is so great, that we ascribe less authority unto the Scriptures than we ought, we must diligently note such manner of speeches, and acquaint ourselves with them, that we may oftentimes remember the authority of God to confirm our faith withal.

[1] "Offendicula," small scandals.

17. *Adopted.* It is word for word *reckoned.* And he saith that he was one of the number, that he might signify unto them that it was needful that the empty place should be filled, to the end that the number might continue whole. And to this purpose serveth that which followeth, that he had obtained a part in the ministry. For thereupon it doth follow that the body should be, as it were, lame, if that part should be wanting. Surely it was a thing which might make them greatly amazed, that he whom Christ had extolled unto so high dignity should fall headlong into such destruction. Which circumstance doth increase the cruelty of the fact,[1] and teacheth the rest to take heed unto themselves.[2] Neither is it to be doubted but that the disciples did remember Judas with great grief and sorrow. But Peter doth here express by name the excellency of his function, that he might make them more attentive and more careful to provide a remedy.

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Secondly, it should have been an absurd thing to have spoken after this among them, that the field which was bought with the money that was given to betray Christ was called of the Hebrews, in their own mother tongue, *Aceldama.* But whereas some do answer, that Peter spoke this unto the Galileans, whose speech did disagree with the Jewish tongue, it is but vain and frivolous. In very deed they did somewhat disagree in pronunciation; yet not so much but that they did well understand one another; like as do these of Paris and the men of Rouen.

Furthermore, how could this be a fit word for Jerusalem, where Peter made his sermon? To what end should he in-

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terpret in Greek among the Hebrews their own mother tongue? Therefore doth Luke of himself put in this sentence concerning the death of Judas, lest Peter's words might seem strange[1] through ignorance of that history.

He possessed a field. This word hath a double signification, which, in my opinion, doth rather signify in this place to possess than to get; yet because it skilleth little whether way we read it, I leave it indifferent. And he speaketh after this sort, not because Judas had the use of the field, or that he himself did buy it, seeing it was bought after his death. But Luke's meaning was, that his burial was the perpetual note of ignominy; was the reward which he had for his falsehood and wicked act. Neither did he so much sell Christ for thirty pieces as his apostleship. He enjoyed not the money;[2] he only possessed the field. Furthermore, it came to pass through the marvellous providence of God, that the very common name of the field should be a note of infamy for the priests, which had bought (the) innocent blood of [from] the traitor. He saith that the Hebrews did call it by that name in their tongue, because he himself was a Grecian born; and he calleth that the Hebrew tongue which the Jews did use after the captivity of Babylon, namely, such as was mixed of the Assyrian tongue and of the Chaldean tongue.

It is written in the book of Psalms. He taketh away, by authority of Scriptures, all offence which might have happened by reason of the falling away of Judas. Yet might this place seem to be greatly wrested: First, in that David did not wish that these things might befal any particular person, but (in the plural number) he wisheth them unto his enemies. Secondly, it seemeth that Peter doth apply these things amiss unto Judas, which were spoken of the enemies of David. I answer, that David doth there speak after this [afterwards] of himself, that he may describe the condition and state of Christ's kingdom.

In that Psalm (I say) is contained the common image of

[1] "Lectoribus obscura essent," might be obscure to his readers.
[2] "Argento potitus non est," he did not obtain the money.

ness, doth reject the consideration of the works of God, yet are they never without fruit, as we may see in this history.

14. *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lift up his voice, and spake unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye which dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known unto you, and with your ears hear my words.*
15. *For these men are not drunk as ye suppose; for it is the third hour of the day.*
16. *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,*
17. *And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your elders shall dream dreams:*
18. *Verily, I will pour out of my Spirit in those days upon my servants, and upon mine handmaids, and they shall prophesy.*
19. *And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs upon the earth beneath, blood and fire, and vapour of smoke.*
20. *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord do come.*
21. *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord he shall be saved.*

14. *And Peter, standing.* By this word *standing* he did signify, that there was a grave sermon made in the assembly; for they did rise when they spake unto the people, to the end they might be the better heard. The sum of this sermon is this, he gathereth that Christ is already revealed and given by the gift of the Holy Ghost, which they saw. Yet, first, he refuteth that false opinion, in that they thought that the disciples were drunk. This refutation consisteth upon a probable argument; because men use not to be drunk betimes in the morning. For, as Paul saith, "Those which are drunk are drunk in the night," (1 Thess. v. 7.) For they flee the light for shame. And surely so great is the filthiness of this vice, that for good causes it hateth the light. And yet this argument were not always good; for Esaias

terpret in Greek among the Hebrews their own mother tongue? Therefore doth Luke of himself put in this sentence concerning the death of Judas, lest Peter's words might seem strange[1] through ignorance of that history.

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[2] "Pecuniam non est," he did not obtain the money.

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the whole Church, which is the body of the Son of God. Therefore, the things which are there set down must needs have been fulfilled in the head, which are indeed fulfilled, as the evangelists do testify. Now, if any man object that those things which there were spoken against the enemies of David do not fitly agree unto Judas, we may easily gather that they do so much the rather agree with him, because David doth not respect himself as being separated from the body of the Church; but rather as he was one of the members of Christ, and so taking upon him his image, he steppeth forth in his name.

Whosoever shall mark that this singular person was attributed to David, that he should be a figure of Christ, will not marvel if all these things be applied unto him which were prefigured in David. Although, therefore, he doth comprehend the whole Church, yet he beginneth at the head thereof, and doth especially describe what things Christ should suffer by the hands of the wicked. For we learn out of Paul's doctrine, that whatsoever afflictions the godly suffer, they are part of the afflictions of Christ, and serve to the fulfilling of the same, (Col. i. 14.) This order and connection did David observe, or rather the Spirit of God, who meant by the mouth of David to instruct the whole Church. But as touching the persecutors of Christ, all that which is commonly spoken of them is by good right referred unto their standard-bearer; whose impiety and wickedness, as it is most famous, so his punishment ought to be made known unto all men. If any man do object again, that that which is recited in the Psalm is only certain cursings, and not prophecies; and that, therefore, Peter doth gather improperly that it was of necessity that it should be fulfilled, it is soon answered. For David was not moved with any perverse or corrupt affection of the flesh to crave vengeance; but he had the Holy Spirit to be his guide and director. Therefore, what things soever he prayed for there, being inspired with the Holy Ghost, they have the same strength which prophecies have, because the Spirit doth require no other thing than that which God

hath determined with himself to perform, and will also promise unto us. But whereas Peter doth cite out of the Scriptures two diverse testimonies; by the first is meant, that Judas, together with his name and family, should quite be extinguished, that his place might be empty; the other, which he fetcheth out of the 109th Psalm, tendeth to this end, that there should be another chosen to supply his place. These seem at first to be contrary; namely, a waste habitation and succession. Yet, because the Spirit saith only, in the former place, that the adversaries of the Church should be taken away, that their place might be empty, and without one to dwell therein, in respect of themselves, this is no let why another may not afterward supply their empty place. Yea, this doth also augment their punishment, in that the honour, after it was taken from him that was unworthy thereof, is given to another.

And his bishoprick. The Hebrew word could not be translated more fitly. For פְּקוּדָה (*pecudah*) doth signify a jurisdiction or government, so called of the overseeing and beholding of things. For as for those which interpret it *wife*, the text[1] refuteth them; for it followeth in the next verse, of his wife, that she may be made a widow. Therefore, after that he had wished that the wicked may be deprived of his life, he addeth, moreover, that he may be spoiled of his honour; neither doth he stay here, but also he desireth that another may succeed him, whereby, as I have said before, his punishment is doubled. In the meanwhile, he noteth by the way,[2] that this false, treacherous, and wicked person, whereof he speaketh, should not be some one of the common sort, but such an one as should be indued with honour and dignity; from which, nevertheless, he shall fall. And out of this place must we learn, that the wicked shall not escape scot free, which have persecuted the Church of God; for this miserable and wretched end is prepared for them all.

21. *We must, therefore.* This which he bringeth in might

[1] "Contextus," context. [2] "Oblique," indirectly.

seem, at the first sight, to be far set, [fetched.] For if so be it David did speak of transposing[1] Judas's bishoprick, it did not thereupon straightway follow that the disciples should choose another to be his successor; yet, because they knew that they had this charge given them to order the Church, so soon as Peter had told them that it did please the Lord that it should be so, he gathereth thereupon that they ought to do it. For whensoever God will use as means[2] to maintain the government of his Church, so soon as we know what his will is, we must not linger, but stoutly perform whatsoever is required in our ministry (and function.) That was, without all controversy, what was the duty of the Church; like as, at this day, when we hear that those must be put from their office which behave themselves ungodly and wickedly, and that others must be chosen in their rooms, the Church must take this charge in hand. Wherefore, it was superfluous to move any question about a thing that was not to be doubted of. Therefore, let us always remember to consider what we have to do, that we may be ready to obey the Lord. Furthermore, when as he intreateth of the making of an apostle, he saith, He must be a witness of the resurrection; which signifieth that the apostleship is not without the preaching of the gospel. Whence it may appear how vain and frivolous the Popish bishops are, which having on only dumb visors, brag that they are the successors of the apostles; but wherein are they like unto them? I grant that Peter doth here require such a witness as saw the Lord after his resurrection, of which sort John professeth himself to be one, when he saith, "He which saw it beareth witness," (John xix. 35.) For this did serve for the confirmation of faith; yet, nevertheless, Peter maketh it a thing necessary in him and the rest of his fellows in office, that they should teach, whilst he maketh them and himself preachers or witnesses of the resurrection.

He nameth the resurrection, not because they must bear

[1] "Transferendo," transferring. [2] "Quum opera nostra uti velit Deus," since God is pleased to use our agency.

witness thereof alone; but because, first, under this is comprehended the preaching of the death of Christ; secondly, because we have the end of our redemption therein, and the accomplishment thereof, and also it bringeth with it the celestial government of Christ, and the power of the Spirit in defending his, in establishing justice and equity, in restoring order, in abolishing the tyranny of sin, and in putting to flight all the enemies of the Church. Let us know, therefore, that those things are not excluded by this word which are necessarily knit together. Nevertheless, let us note that the resurrection is here named before other things, as being the chief point of the gospel, as also Paul teacheth, (1 Cor. xv. 17.)

But were the apostles alone witnesses of the resurrection? Was not this also common to the rest of the disciples? For Peter seemeth to challenge this as proper only to the apostles. I answer, that this title is therefore attributed unto them, because they were chosen peculiarly unto that function, and because they had the chief room amongst those which did bring this embassage; therefore, though they were the chief of those which were assigned, yet were not they only appointed thereunto.

All that time. He beginneth at that time when Jesus began to show himself unto the world, which is diligently to be observed, as before I have said; for he lived privately until such time as he was almost thirty years of age. For he would not make himself known further than was needful for our salvation. Therefore, when the time was come wherein he must go about that business which his Father had appointed him, he came abroad like a new man, and one that was but lately born. Every man may easily perceive what great force this hath to bridle our curiosity. The whole life of Christ might have been a mirror most marvellous,[1] of more than absolute perfection; and yet, notwithstanding, that he might keep us occupied in the study and meditation of those things which were most needful to be known, he would lead the better part of his life obscurely

[1] "Admirabile speculum," an admirable mirror.

and in secret.[1] Who dare now wander without Christ, seeing that he doth apply the knowledge of himself to the edifying of faith?

The Hebrews take this, to go in and out, for to be conversant and to lead the life among men. In which sense, citizens are said to go in and out by the gates of their city; so John x. 9, "If any man enter in by me, he shall go in and out, and shall find pasture." Although, in the Second Book of the Chronicles, the first chapter, and tenth verse, it seemeth to be a token of rule and government.

23. *Then they presented two, Joseph, whose sirname was Barsabas, which was called Justus, and Matthias.*
24. *And when they had prayed, they said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,*
25. *That he may take the room of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas is fallen, that he might go unto his place.*
26. *And they gave in their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was by common consent counted with the eleven apostles.*

23. They were to choose one only into the room of Judas; they present two. Here may a question be asked, Why they were not contented with one only? Was it because they were so like, that they could not discern whether was more fit? This truly had been no sufficient reason why they should suffer it to be decided by lots. And also it seemeth that Joseph was of greater estimation otherwise; or was it because they were diversely affectioned? But this seemeth scarce probable, neither is this to be admitted as true, because of that most excellent testimony which Luke did give a little before of their unity and agreement. Lastly, It had been very absurd for them to have polluted the election of the apostle with such strife and contention.[2] But for this cause did they use the casting of lots, that it might be known that Matthias was not only chosen by the voices of

[1] "Quasi sepultam," as it were buried.

[2] "Tali dissidio," with such dissension.

men, but also that he was made by the determination and judgment of God.

For there was this difference between the apostles and the pastors, that the pastors were chosen simply by the Church, the apostles were called of God. In which respect Paul, in the preface of his Epistle to the Galatians, (Gal. i. 2,) doth profess himself to be an apostle, "neither of men, neither made by man." Therefore, like as the dignity of this function was excellent, so was it meet that in the choosing of Matthias, the chief judgment should be left unto God, howsoever men did their duty. Christ by his own mouth did appoint the rest; therefore, if Matthias had been chosen only by man to be one of them, he should have had less authority than they. This was very orderly done,[1] that the disciples should present unto God those whom they thought to be the best; and he should choose to himself whom he knew to be most fit, so that God, by the fall of the lot, doth pronounce that he did allow of the apostleship of Matthias. But the apostles might seem to have dealt very rashly and disorderly, which laid so great and weighty a matter upon a lot; for what certainty could they gather thereby? I answer, that they did it only as they were moved thereunto by the Holy Spirit; for although Luke doth not express this, yet, because he will not accuse the disciples of rashness, but rather doth show that this election was lawful and approved of God; I say, therefore, that they went this way to work, being moved by the Spirit, like as they were directed in all the action by the same Spirit. But why do they not pray that God would choose whom he would out of the whole multitude? Why do they restrain his judgment unto two? Is not this to rob God of his liberty, when as they tie him, and, as it were, make him subject unto their voices and consents?[2] But whosoever shall quietly ponder the matter shall plainly perceive, by the drift of Luke, that the disciples durst do nothing but that which they knew was their

[1] "Medium fuit temperamentum," a middle course was adopted.
[2] "Suis suffragiis," their suffrages.

duty to do, and was commanded them by the Lord. As for the contentious, let them go shake their ears.[1]

24. *In praying, they said.* Word for word it is, Having prayed, they said; but there is no obscurity in the sense, because his meaning was to speak as followeth, that they prayed; and yet he doth not reckon up all the words, being content briefly to show the sum. Therefore, although they were both of honest conversation, yea, although they did excel in holiness and other virtues, yet because the integrity of the heart, whereof God is the alone knower and judge, is the chief, the disciples pray that God would bring that to light which was hidden from men. The same ought to be required even at this day in choosing pastors; for howsoever we are not to appoint two for one, yet because we may oftentimes be deceived, and the discerning of spirits cometh of the Lord, we must always pray unto God, that he will show unto us what men he will have to be ministers, that he may direct and govern our purposes. Here we may also gather what great regard we must have of integrity and innocency in choosing pastors, without which both learning and eloquence, and what excellency soever can be invented, are as nothing.[2]

25.[3] *Of the ministry and apostleship.* Because the word ministry was base, he addeth apostleship, wherein there is greater dignity; although the sense shall be more plain if you expound it, "the ministry of the apostleship." For the figure *hypallage* is common in the Scriptures. Assuredly Luke meant to join with the burden the excellency of the office, that it might have the greater reverence and authority; and yet this was his intent also, to declare that the apostles are called unto a painful function.

26. *They gave in their lots.* We will not, in this place,

[1] "Valere sinamus," let us leave them alone, bid them good day.
[2] "In fumum abeunt," go to smoke. [3] There is here a transposition in the translation. The 26th verse precedes the 25th.

make any long disputation about lots. Those men who think it to be wickedness to cast lots at all, offend partly through ignorance, and partly they understand not the force of this word. There is nothing which men do not corrupt with their boldness and vanity, whereby it is come to pass that they have brought lots into great abuse and superstition. For that divination or conjecture which is made by lots is altogether devilish. But when magistrates divide provinces among them, and brethren their inheritance, it is a thing lawful. Which thing Solomon doth plainly testify, when he maketh God the governor of the event. "The lots (saith he) are cast into the bosom, and the judgment of them cometh forth from the Lord," (Prov. xvi. 33.) This ordinance or custom is no more corrupt and depraved by corruption, than the corrupt vanity of the Chaldeans doth corrupt true and natural astrology. Whilst the Chaldeans go about, with the name of astrology, to cloak and colour their wicked curiosity, they defame a science both profitable and praiseworthy. The same do those which tell men their destinies (as they call them) by casting lots; but it is our duty to discern the lawful use from the corruption. He saith the lots were given, that being put into a pot, or one of their laps, they might afterwards be drawn out. And here we must also note that this word *lot* is diversely taken in this place; for when he said before that Judas had obtained a lot of the ministry, his meaning was, (according to the common custom of the Scripture,) that he had a portion given him of the Lord. He speaketh afterwards properly, and without any figure of a lot, yet is it likely, forasmuch as the word גּוֹרָל (*goral*) is commonly used by the Hebrews for both things, that Peter meant to allude unto that which they were about to do, and that Luke had respect unto the self-same thing.

The lot fell upon Matthias. It came to pass as no man would have looked for; for we may gather by that which goeth before, that there was not so great account made of Matthias as of the other; for, besides that Luke gave him the former place, the two sirnames which Barsabas had do

show that he was in great estimation. He was called Barsabas, (that is, *the son of an oath*, or *of rest*,) of the thing itself, as if he were some mirror, either of faithfulness and innocency, or of a quiet and modest nature. The other sirname did import singular honesty. This man, therefore, in men's judgment, was the former, [superior;] but God did prefer Matthias before him. Whereby we are taught that we must not glory if we be extolled unto the skies in the opinion of men, and if by their voices and consents[1] we be judged to be most excellent men; but we must rather have regard of this, to approve ourselves unto God, who alone is the most lawful and just judge, by whose sentence and judgment we stand or fall. And we may oftentimes mark this also, that God passeth over him which is the chiefest in the sight of men, that he may throw down all pride which is in man. In that he addeth, that *he was reckoned amongst the rest*, he wipeth away all sinister note of rashness from the casting of lots, because the Church did embrace him as chosen by God on whom the lot fell.

CHAPTER II.

1. *And when the day of Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all with one accord gathered together:*
2. *And there was made from heaven suddenly a sound, as it were when a violent wind breaketh in, and it filled all the house where they sat:*
3. *And they saw cloven tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them.*
4. *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with strange tongues, even as the Spirit gave them to speak.*

1. *And when.* *To be fulfilled* is taken in this place for *to come*. For Luke beareth record again of their perseverance,

[1] "Eorum suffragiis," by their suffrages.

when he saith that they stood all in one place until the time which was set them. Hereunto serveth the adverb, *with one accord.* Furthermore, we have before declared why the Lord did defer the sending of his Spirit a whole month and a half. But the question is, why he sent him upon that day chiefly. I will not refute that high and subtle interpretation of Augustine, that like as the law was given to the old people fifty days after Easter, being written in tables of stone by the hand of God, so the Spirit, whose office it is to write the same in our hearts, did fulfil that which was figured in the giving of the law as many days after the resurrection of Christ, who is the true Passover. Notwithstanding, whereas he urgeth this his subtle interpretation as necessary, in his book of Questions upon Exodus, and in his Second Epistle unto Januarius, I would wish him to be more sober and modest therein. Notwithstanding, let him keep his own interpretation to himself. In the mean season, I will embrace that which is more sound.

Upon the feast day, wherein a great multitude was wont to resort to Jerusalem, was this miracle wrought, that it might be more famous. And truly by means hereof was it spread abroad, even unto the uttermost parts and borders of the earth.[1] For the same purpose did Christ oftentimes go up to Jerusalem upon the holy days,[2] (John ii., v., vii., x., xii.,) to the end those miracles which he wrought might be known to many, and that in the greater assembly of people there might be the greater fruit of his doctrine. For so will Luke afterward declare, that Paul made haste that he might come to Jerusalem before the day of Pentecost, not for any religion's sake, but because of the greater assembly, that he might profit the more, (Acts xx. 16.) Therefore, in making choice of the day, the profit of the miracle was respected: First, that it might be the more extolled at Jerusalem, because the Jews were then more bent to consider the works of God; and, secondly, that it might be bruited abroad, even in far coun-

[1] "Ut more videbimus," as we shall by and by see, omitted. [2] "Festis diebus," on feast days, or festivals.

tries. They called it the fiftieth day, beginning to reckon at the first-fruits.

2. *And there was made.* It was requisite that the gift should be visible, that the bodily sense might the more stir up the disciples. For such is our slothfulness to consider the gifts of God, that unless he awake all our senses, his power shall pass away unknown. This was, therefore, a preparation that they might the better know that the Spirit was now come which Christ had promised. Although it was not so much for their sake as for ours, even as in that the cloven and fiery tongues appeared, there was rather respect had of us, and of all the whole Church in that, than of them. For God was able to have furnished them with necessary ability to preach the gospel, although he should use no sign. They themselves might have known that it came to pass neither by chance, neither yet through their own industry, that they were so suddenly changed; but those signs which are here set down were about to be profitable for all ages; as we perceive at this day that they profit us. And we must briefly note the proportion of the signs. The violence of the wind did serve to make them afraid; for we are never rightly prepared to receive the grace of God, unless the confidence (and boldness) of the flesh be tamed. For as we have access unto him by faith, so humility and fear setteth open the gate, that he may come in unto us. He hath nothing to do with proud and careless men. It is a common thing for the Spirit to be signified by wind, (or a blast,) (John xx. 22.) For both Christ himself, when he was about to give the Spirit to his apostles, did breathe upon them; and in Ezekiel's vision there was a whirlwind and wind, (Ezek. i. 4.) Yea, the word Spirit itself is a translated word; for, because that *hypostasis*, or person of the Divine essence, which is called the Spirit, is of itself incomprehensible, the Scripture doth borrow the word of the wind or blast, because it is the power of God which God doth pour into all creatures as it were by breathing. The shape of tongues is restrained unto the present circum-

stance. For as the figure and shape of a dove which came down upon Christ, (John i. 32,) had a signification agreeable to the office and nature of Christ, so God did now make choice of a sign which might be agreeable to the thing signified, namely, that it might show such effect and working of the Holy Ghost in the apostles as followed afterward.

The diversity of tongues did hinder the gospel from being spread abroad any farther; so that, if the preachers of the gospel had spoken one language only, all men would have thought that Christ had been shut up in the small corner of Jewry. But God invented a way whereby it might break out, when he divided and clove the tongues of the apostles, that they might spread that abroad amongst all people which was delivered to them. Wherein appeareth the manifold goodness of God, because a plague and punishment of man's pride was turned into matter of blessing. For whence came the diversity of tongues, save only that the wicked and ungodly counsels of men might be brought to nought? (Gen. xi. 7.) But God doth furnish the apostles with the diversity of tongues now, that he may bring and call home, into a blessed unity, men which wander here and there. These cloven tongues made all men to speak the language of Canaan, as Isaiah foretold, (Isa. xix. 18.) For what language soever they speak, yet do they call upon one Father, which is in heaven, with one mouth and one spirit, (Rom. xv. 6.) I said that that was done for our sake, not only because the fruit came unto us, but because we know that the gospel came unto us not by chance, but by the appointment of God, who to this end gave the apostles cloven tongues, lest any nation should want that doctrine which was committed unto them; whereby is proved the calling of the Gentiles; and, secondly, hereby their doctrine doth purchase credit, which we know was not forged by man, seeing that we hear that the Spirit did dwell in their tongues.

Now, it remaineth that we declare what the *fire* meaneth. Without all doubt, it was a token of the (force and) efficacy which should be exercised in the voice of the apostles. Otherwise, although their sound had gone out into the ut-

termost parts of the world, they should only have beat the air, without doing any good at all. Therefore, the Lord doth show that their voice shall be fiery, that it may inflame the hearts of men; that the vanity of the world being burnt and consumed, it may purge and renew all things. Otherwise they durst never have taken upon them so hard a function, unless the Lord had assured them of the power of their preaching. Hereby it came to pass that the doctrine of the gospel did not only sound in the air, but pierce into the minds of men, and did fill them with an heavenly heat (and burning.) Neither was this force showed only in the mouth of the apostles, but it appeareth daily. And, therefore, we must beware lest, when the fire burneth, we be as stubble. Furthermore, the Lord did once give the Holy Ghost under a visible shape, that we may assure ourselves that his invisible and hidden grace shall never be wanting to the Church.

And it sat. Because the number is suddenly changed, it is to be doubted whether he speaketh of the fire. He said that there appeared tongues as it had been of fire. It followeth by and by, *and it sat upon them.* Notwithstanding, I refer it unto the Spirit. For the Hebrews use commonly to express the substantive of the verb in the second member, which they did omit in the former. Wherefore we have an example in this place: *It sat* upon them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And we know that although Luke did write in Greek, yet is he full of those phrases which the Hebrews use.[1] Now, whereas he calleth the tongues the Holy Ghost, it is according to the custom of the Scripture. For John calleth the dove by the same name, (John i. 32,) because the Lord would testify and declare the presence of his Spirit by some such sign. If it were a vain sign, it should be an absurd naming (to call the sign by the name of the thing signified;) but where the thing is annexed, the name of the thing is fitly given to the sign which offereth the same unto our senses to be per-

[1] "Hebraismis," Hebraisms.

ceived. The fulness of the Spirit, wherewith he saith every one was replenished, doth not express the [an] equal measure of gifts in every one, but that excellence which should be meet for such a calling.[1]

4. *They began to speak.* He showeth that the effect did appear presently, and also to what use their tongues were to be framed and applied. But because Luke setteth down shortly after, that strangers out of divers countries did marvel, because that every one of them did hear the apostles speaking in their own tongue, some think that they spake not in divers tongues, but that they did all understand that which was spoken in one tongue, as well as if they should hear their natural tongue.[2] Therefore, they think that one and the same sound of the voice was diversely distributed amongst the hearers. Another conjecture they have, because Peter made one sermon in the audience of many gathered together out of divers countries, who could not understand his speech (and language,) unless another voice should come unto their ears than that which proceeded out of his mouth. But we must first note that the disciples spake indeed with strange tongues; otherwise the miracle had not been wrought in them, but in the hearers. So that the similitude should have been false whereof he made mention before; neither should the Spirit have been given so much to them as to others. Again, we hear how Paul giveth thanks to God, that he speaketh with divers tongues, (1 Cor. xiv. 18.) Truly he challengeth to himself both the understanding, and also the use thereof. Neither did he attain to this skill by his own study and industry, but he had it by the gift of the Spirit. In the same place he affirmeth that it is an especial gift, wherewith all men are not endued. I suppose that it doth manifestly appear hereby that the apostles had the variety and understanding of tongues given them, that they might speak unto the Greeks in Greek, un-

[1] "Excellentiam quæ obeundo muneri par futura esset," but that excellence which might be sufficient to enable each to execute his office.

[2] "Nativum," native.

6. *When this was noised abroad.* Luke saith thus in Greek, *This voice being made;* but his meaning is, that the fame was spread abroad, whereby it came to pass that a great multitude came together. For if one after another in divers places, and at divers times, had heard the apostles speaking in divers tongues, the miracle had not been so famous; therefore they come altogether into one place, that the diversity of tongues may the better appear by the present comparison. There is a further circumstance also here to be noted, that the country (and native soil) of the apostles was commonly known, and this was also commonly known, that they never went out of their country to learn[1] strange tongues. Therefore, forasmuch as one speaketh Latin, another Greek, another the Arabian tongue, as occasion was offered, and that indifferently, and every one doth also change his tongue, the work of God appeareth more plainly hereby.

11. *The wonderful works of God.* Luke noteth two things which caused the hearers to wonder; first, because the apostles being before ignorant and private persons,[2] born in a base corner,[3] did, notwithstanding, intreat profoundly of divine matters, and of heavenly wisdom. The other is, because they have new tongues given them suddenly. Both things are worth the noting, because to huddle out [utter] words unadvisedly and foolishly, should not so much have served to move their minds; and the majesty of the things ought the more to have moved them to consider the miracle. Although they give due honour to God, in that they are astonished and amazed, yet the principal fruit of the miracle is expressed in this, that they inquire, and thereby declare that they are prepared to learn; for otherwise their amazedness and wondering should not have done them any great good. And certainly we must so

[1] "Ut peregrinas linguas discere potuerint," so as to be able to learn foreign tongues. [2] "Idiotæ," unlearned. [3] "Nati in contempto angulo," born in a district of no repute.

wonder at the works of God, that there must be also a consideration, and a desire to understand.

12. *Others mocking.* Hereby it appeareth how monstrous as well the sluggishness, as also the ungodliness of men is, when Satan hath taken away their mind. If God should openly (and visibly) descend from heaven, his majesty could scarce more manifestly appear than in this miracle. Whosoever hath any drop of sound understanding in him must needs be stricken with the only hearing of it. How beastly, then, are those men who see it with their eyes, and yet scoff, and go about with their jests to mock the power of God? But the matter is so. There is nothing so wonderful which those men do not turn to a jest who are touched with no care of God; because they do, even upon set purposes, harden themselves in their ignorance in things most plain. And it is a just punishment of God, which he bringeth upon such pride, to deliver them to Satan, to be driven headlong into blind fury. Wherefore, there is no cause why we should marvel that there be so many at this day so blind in so great light, if they be so deaf when such manifest doctrine is delivered, yea, if they wantonly refuse salvation when it is offered unto them. For if the wonderful and strange works of God, wherein he doth wonderfully set forth his power, be subject to the mockery of men, what shall become of doctrine, which they think tasteth of nothing but of that which is common? Although Luke doth signify unto us that they were not of the worst sort, or altogether past hope, which did laugh (and mock;) but he meant rather to declare how the common sort was affected when they saw this miracle. And truly it hath been always so in the world, for very few have been touched with the true feeling of God as often as he hath revealed himself. Neither is it any marvel; for religion is a rare virtue, and a virtue which few men have; which is, indeed, the beginning of understanding. Nevertheless, howsoever the more part of men, through a certain hard stiff-necked-

ness, doth reject the consideration of the works of God, yet are they never without fruit, as we may see in this history.

14. *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lift up his voice, and spake unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye which dwell at Jerusalem, let this be known unto you, and with your ears hear my words.*
15. *For these men are not drunk as ye suppose; for it is the third hour of the day.*
16. *But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,*
17. *And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your elders shall dream dreams:*
18. *Verily, I will pour out of my Spirit in those days upon my servants, and upon mine handmaids, and they shall prophesy.*
19. *And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs upon the earth beneath, blood and fire, and vapour of smoke.*
20. *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord do come.*
21. *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord he shall be saved.*

14. *And Peter, standing.* By this word *standing* he did signify, that there was a grave sermon made in the assembly; for they did rise when they spake unto the people, to the end they might be the better heard. The sum of this sermon is this, he gathereth that Christ is already revealed and given by the gift of the Holy Ghost, which they saw. Yet, first, he refuteth that false opinion, in that they thought that the disciples were drunk. This refutation consisteth upon a probable argument; because men use not to be drunk betimes in the morning. For, as Paul saith, "Those which are drunk are drunk in the night," (1 Thess. v. 7.) For they flee the light for shame. And surely so great is the filthiness of this vice, that for good causes it hateth the light. And yet this argument were not always good; for Esaias

doth inveigh in his time against those which did rise early to follow drunkenness. And at this day there be many who, like hogs, so soon as they awake, run to quaffing. But because this is[1] a common custom amongst men, Peter saith, that it is no likely thing. Those which have but even small skill in antiquity do know that the civil day, from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof, was divided into twelve hours; so that the hours were longer in summer, and shorter in winter. Therefore, that which should now be the ninth before noon in winter, and in summer the eighth, was the third hour amongst the old people.[2] Therefore, whereas Peter doth only lightly remove the opinion of drunkenness, he doth it for this cause, because it had been superfluous to have stood about any long excuse.[3] Therefore, as in a matter which was certain and out of doubt, he doth rather pacify those which mocked, than labour to teach them. And he doth not so much refute them by the circumstance of time, as by the testimony of Joel. For when he saith that that is now come to pass which was foretold, he toucheth briefly their unthankfulness, because they do not acknowledge such an excellent benefit promised unto them in times past, which they now see with their eyes. And whereas he upbraideth the fault of a few unto all,[4] he doth it not to this end, that he may make them all guilty of the same fault; but because a fit occasion was offered by their mocking to teach them altogether, he doth not foreslow the same.[5]

17. *It shall be in the last days.* By this effect he proveth that the Messiah is already revealed. Joel, indeed, doth not express the last days, (Joel ii. 29;) but for as much as he intreateth of the perfect restoring of the Church, it is not to be doubted but that that prophecy belongeth unto

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the last age alone. Wherefore, that which Peter bringeth doth no whit dissent from Joel's meaning; but he doth only add this word for exposition sake, that the Jews might know that the Church could by no other means be restored, which was then decayed, but by being renewed by the Spirit of God. Again, because the repairing of the Church should be like unto a new world, therefore Peter saith that it shall be in the last days. And surely this was a common and familiar thing among the Jews, that all those great promises concerning the blessed and well-ordered state of the Church should not be fulfilled until Christ, by his coming, should restore all things. Wherefore, it was out of all doubt amongst them, that that which is cited out of Joel doth appertain unto the last time. Now, by the last days, or fulness of time, is meant the stable and firm condition of the Church, in the manifestation or revealing of Christ.

I will pour out my Spirit. He intendeth to prove, (as we have already said,) that the Church can be repaired by no other means, saving only by the giving of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, forasmuch as they did all hope that the restoring drew near, he accuseth them of sluggishness, because they do not once think upon the way and means thereof. And when the prophet saith, "I will pour out," it is, without all question, that he meant by this word to note the great abundance of the Spirit. And we must take *I will pour out of my Spirit* in the same sense, as if he had said simply, I will pour out my Spirit. For these latter words are the words of the prophet. But Peter followed the Grecians, who translate the Hebrew word ח, (*cheth,*) απο. Therefore, some men do in vain more subtilely play the philosophers; because, howsoever the words be changed, yet must we still retain and keep the prophet's meaning. Nevertheless, when God is said to pour out his Spirit, I confess it must be thus understood, that he maketh manifold variety and change of gifts to flow unto men from his Spirit, as it were out of the only fountain, the fountain which can never be drawn dry. For, as Paul doth testify, there be divers gifts, and yet but one Spirit, (1 Cor. xii. 4.) And hence do we gather a

profitable doctrine, that we can have no more excellent thing given us of God than the grace of the Spirit; yea, that all other things are nothing worth if this be wanting. For, when God will briefly promise salvation to his people, he affirmeth that he will give them his Spirit. Hereupon it followeth that we can obtain no good things until we have the Spirit given us. And truly it is, as it were, the key which openeth unto us the door, that we may enter into all the treasures of spiritual good things; and that we may also have entrance into the kingdom of God.

Upon all flesh. It appeareth, by that which followeth, of what force this generality is; for, first, it is set down generally, *all flesh;* after that the partition is added, whereby the prophet doth signify that there shall be no difference of age or kind, but that God admitteth all, one with another, unto the partaking of his grace. It is said, therefore, *all flesh*, because both young and old, men and women, are thereby signified; yet here may a question be moved, why God doth promise that unto his people, as some new and unwonted good thing, which he was wont to do for them from the beginning throughout all ages; for there was no age void of the grace of the Spirit. The answer of this question is set down in these two sentences: "I will pour out," and, "Upon all flesh;" for we must here note a double contrariety[1] between the time of the Old and New Testament; for the pouring out (as I have said) doth signify great plenty, when as there was under the law a more scarce distribution; for which cause John also doth say that the Holy Ghost was not given until Christ ascended into heaven. *All flesh* doth signify an infinite multitude, whereas God in times past did vouchsafe to bestow such plenty of his Spirit only upon a few.

Furthermore, in both comparisons we do not deny but that the fathers under the law were partakers of the self-same grace whereof we are partakers; but the Lord doth show that we are above them, as we are indeed. I say,

[1] "Antithesis," antithesis.

that all godly men since the beginning of the world were endued with the same spirit of understanding, of righteousness, and sanctification, wherewith the Lord doth at this day illuminate and regenerate us; but there were but a few which had the light of knowledge given them then, if they be compared with the great multitude of the faithful, which Christ did suddenly gather together by his coming. Again, their knowledge was but obscure and slender, and, as it were, covered with a veil, if it be compared with that which we have at this day out of the gospel, where Christ, the Sun of righteousness, doth shine with perfect brightness, as it were at noon day. Neither doth that any whit hurt or hinder that a few had such an excellent faith, that peradventure they have no equal at this day. For their understanding did nevertheless smell or savour of the instruction and schoolmastership[1] of the law. For that is always true, that godly kings and prophets have not seen nor heard those things which Christ hath revealed by his coming. Therefore, to the end the prophet Joel may commend the excellency of the New Testament, he affirmeth and foretelleth that the grace of the Spirit shall be more plentiful in time thereof; and, again, that it shall come unto more men, (Matth. xiii. 17; Luke x. 24.)

And your sons shall prophesy. By the word *prophesy* he meant to note the rare and singular gift of understanding. And to the same purpose tendeth that partition which followeth afterwards, "*your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;*" for we gather out of the twelfth chapter of Numbers, that these were the two ordinary ways whereby God did reveal himself to the prophets. For in that place, when the Lord exempteth Moses from the common sort of prophets, he saith, "I appear unto my servants by a vision, or by a dream; but I speak unto Moses face to face," (Numb. xii. 6.) Therefore, we see that two kinds are put after the general word for a confirmation; yet this is the sum, that they shall all be prophets so soon as

[1] "Pædagogiam," tutelage.

the Holy Ghost shall be poured out from heaven. But here it is objected, that there was no such thing, even in the apostles themselves, neither yet in the whole multitude of the faithful. I answer, that the prophets did commonly use to shadow under tropes most fit for their time,[1] the kingdom of Christ. When they speak of the worship of God, they name the altar, the sacrifices, the offering of gold, silver, and frankincense. Notwithstanding, we know that the altars do cease, the sacrifices are abolished, whereof there was some use in time of the law; and that the Lord requireth some higher thing at our hands than earthly riches. That is true, indeed; but the prophets, whilst they apply their style unto the capacity of their time, comprehend under figures (wherewith the people were then well acquainted) those things which we see otherwise revealed and showed now, like as when he promiseth elsewhere that he will make priests of Levites, and Levites of the common sort of men, (Isaiah lxvi. 21,) this is his meaning, that under the kingdom of Christ every base person shall be extolled unto an honourable estate; therefore, if we desire to have the true and natural meaning of this place, we must not urge the words which are taken out of the old order[2] of the law; but we must only seek the truth without figures, and this is it, that the apostles, through the sudden inspiration of the Spirit, did intreat of the heavenly mysteries prophetically, that is to say, divinely, and above the common order.

Therefore, this word *prophesy* doth signify nothing else save only the rare and excellent gift of understanding, as if Joel should say, Under the kingdom of Christ there shall not be a few prophets only, unto whom God may reveal his secrets; but all men shall be endued with spiritual wisdom, even to the prophetical excellency. As it is also in Jeremiah, "Every man shall no longer teach his neighbour; because they shall all know me, from the least unto the greatest," (Jeremiah xxxi. 34.) And in these words Peter inviteth the Jews, unto whom he speaketh, to be partakers of the

[1] "Suo seculo," for their own age. [2] "Œconomia," economy.

same grace. As if he should say, the Lord is ready to pour out that Spirit far and wide which he hath poured upon us. Therefore, unless you yourselves be the cause of let, ye shall receive with us of this fulness. And as for us, let us know that the same is spoken to us at this day which was then spoken to the Jews. For although those visible graces of the Spirit be ceased, yet God hath not withdrawn his Spirit from his Church. Wherefore he offereth him daily unto us all, by this same promise, without putting any difference. Wherefore we are poor and needy only through our own sluggishness; and also it appeareth manifestly, that those are wicked and sacrilegious enemies of the Spirit which keep back the Christian common people from the knowledge of God; and forasmuch as he himself doth not only admit, but also call by name unto himself, women and men, young and old.

18. *Upon my servants.* In these words the promise is restrained unto the worshippers of God. For God doth not profane his Spirit; which he should do, if he should make the same common to the unbelieving and despisers. It is certain that we are made the servants of God by the Spirit; and that, therefore, we are not, until such time as we have received the same; but, first, whom God hath adopted to be of his family, and whom he hath framed by his Spirit to obey him, those doth he furnish with new gifts afterward. Again, the prophet did not respect that order of time, but his meaning was to make this grace proper to the Church alone. And forasmuch as the Church was only among the Jews, he calleth them honourably the servants and handmaids of God. But after that God did gather unto himself on every side a Church, the wall of separation being pulled down, so many as are received into the society of the covenant are called by the same name. Only let us remember, that the Spirit is appointed for the Church properly.

19. *And I will show wonders.* We must first see what is meant by this great day of the Lord. Some do expound it

of the former coming of Christ in the flesh; and others refer it unto the last day of the resurrection; I do allow neither opinion. For, in my judgment, the prophet comprehendeth the whole kingdom of Christ. And so he calleth it the *great day*, after that the Son of God began to be revealed in the flesh, that he may lead us into the fulfilling of his kingdom. Therefore, he appointeth no certain day, but he beginneth this day at the first preaching of the gospel, and he extendeth the same unto the last resurrection. Those which restrain it unto the time of the apostles are moved with this reason, because the prophet joineth this member and that which goeth next before together. But in that there is no absurdity at all, because the prophet doth assign the time when these things began to come to pass, howsoever they have a continual going forward even until the end of the world. Furthermore, whereas he saith that the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, they are figurative speeches, whereby he doth give us to understand thus much, that the Lord will show tokens of his wrath through the whole frame of the world, which shall bring men even to their wit's end, as if there should be some horrible and fearful change of nature wrought. For as the sun and moon are unto us witnesses of God's fatherly favour towards us, whilst that by course they give light to the earth; so, on the other side, the prophet saith, that they shall be messengers to foreshow God's wrath and displeasure. And this is the second member of the prophecy. For after that he had intreated of the spiritual grace which should be abundantly poured out upon all flesh, lest any man should imagine that all things should be quiet and prosperous together, therewithal he addeth that the estate of the world shall be troublesome, and full of great fear under Christ; as Christ himself doth more fully declare, Matth. xxiv. and Luke xxi.

But this serveth greatly to the setting forth of grace, that whereas all things do threaten destruction, yet whosoever doth call upon the name of the Lord is sure to be saved. By the darkness of the sun, by the bloody streaming of the

moon, by the black vapour of smoke, the prophet meant to declare, that whithersoever men turn their eyes, there shall many things appear, both upward and downward, which may make them amazed and afraid, as he hath already said. Therefore, this is as much as if he should have said, that the world was never in a more miserable case, that there were never so many and such cruel tokens of God's wrath. Hence may we gather how inestimable the goodness of God is, who offereth a present remedy for so great evils; and again, how unthankful they are towards God, and how froward, which do not flee unto the sanctuary of salvation, which is nigh unto them, and doth meet them. Again, it is out of all doubt, that God meaneth by this so doleful a description, to stir up all godly men, that they may with a more fervent desire seek for salvation. And Peter citeth it to the same end, that the Jews may know that they shall be more miserable unless they receive that grace of the Spirit which is offered unto them. Yet here may a question be asked, how this can hang together, that when Christ is revealed, there should such a sea of miseries overflow and break out therewithal? For it may seem to be a thing very inconvenient,[1] that he should be the only pledge of God's love toward mankind, in whom the heavenly Father doth lay open all the treasure of his goodness, yea, he poureth out the bowels of his mercy upon us, and that yet, by the coming of the same, his Son, his wrath should be more hot than it was wont, so that it should, as it were, quite consume both heaven and earth at once.

But we must first mark, that because men are too slow to receive Christ, they must be constrained by divers afflictions, as it were with whips. Secondly, forasmuch as Christ doth call unto himself all those which are heavy laden and labour, (Matth. xi. 28,) we must first be tamed by many miseries, that we may learn humility. For through great prosperity men do set up the horns of pride. And he cannot but despise Christ fiercely, whosoever he be, that seemeth to

[1] "Absurdum," absurd.

himself to be happy. Thirdly, because we are, more than we ought, set upon the seeking of the peace of the flesh, whereby it cometh to pass that many tie the grace of Christ unto the present life, it is expedient for us to be accustomed to think otherwise, that we may know that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual. Therefore, to the end God may teach us that the good things of Christ are heavenly, he doth exercise us, according to the flesh, with many miseries; whereby it cometh to pass that we do seek our felicity without the world. Moreover, men do bring miseries upon themselves through their unthankfulness; for the servant which knoweth his master's will, and doth not obey, is worthy of greater and more stripes, (Luke xii. 47.) The more familiarly that God doth communicate with us in Christ, the more doth our ungodliness grow and break out into open contumacy, so that it is no marvel if, when Christ is revealed, there appear many tokens of God's vengeance on the other side, forasmuch as men do hereby more grievously provoke God against them, and kindle his wrath through wicked contempt. Surely, in that the day of Christ is fearful, it is an accidental thing; whether God will correct our slothfulness, to bring us under, which [who] are yet inapt to be taught, or whether he will punish our unthankfulness. For it bringeth with it of itself nothing but that which is pleasant; but the contempt of God's grace doth provoke him to horrible anger not without cause.

21. *Whosoever shall call upon.* An excellent place. For as God doth prick us forward like sluggish asses, with threatenings and terrors to seek salvation, so, after that he hath brought darkness upon the face of heaven and earth, yet doth he show a means whereby salvation may shine before our eyes, to wit, if we shall call upon him. For we must diligently note this circumstance. If God should promise salvation simply, it were a great matter; but it is a far greater when as he promiseth the same amidst manifold dungeons of death. Whilst that (saith he) all things shall be out of order, and the fear of destruction shall possess all things, only call upon me, and ye shall be saved. Therefore,

howsoever man be swallowed up in the gulf of miseries, yet is there set before him a way to escape. We must also note the universal word, *whosoever*. For God admitteth all men unto himself without exception, and by this means doth he invite them to salvation, as Paul gathereth in the tenth chapter to the Romans, and as the prophet had set it down before, "Thou, Lord, which hearest the prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come," (Psalm lxv. 2.)

Therefore, forasmuch as no man is excluded from calling upon God, the gate of salvation is set open unto all men; neither is there any other thing which keepeth us back from entering in, save only our own unbelief. I speak of all unto whom God doth make himself manifest by the gospel. But like as those which call upon the name of the Lord are sure of salvation, so we must think that, without the same, we are thrice miserable and undone. And when as our salvation is placed in calling upon God, there is nothing in the mean season taken from faith, forasmuch as this invocation is grounded on faith alone. There is also another circumstance no less worthy the noting; in that the prophet doth signify, that the calling upon God doth properly appertain and agree unto the last days. For although he would be called upon in all ages, notwithstanding, since that he showed himself to be a Father in Christ, we have the more easy access unto him. Which thing ought both the more to embolden us, and to take from us all sluggishness. As he himself doth also reason, that by this privilege our forwardness to pray is doubled to us: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive;" as if he should say, Heretofore, although I did not yet appear to be a mediator and advocate in the flesh, yet did ye pray; but now, when you shall have me to be your patron, with how much more courage ought ye to do that?

22. *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man showed towards you of God, by powers and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as you yourselves know:*

23. *Him, I say, have ye taken, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, by the hands of wicked men, and have slain him, having fastened him to the cross.*

24. *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the sorrows of death, forasmuch as it was impossible that he should be holden of it.*

22. *Jesus of Nazareth.* Now doth Peter apply unto his purpose the prophecy of Joel; namely, that the Jews may thereby know that the time of restoring was present; and that Christ was given them for this purpose. For this promise was no otherwise to be fulfilled, save only by the coming of the Mediator. And this is the right use of all those gifts which we have by Christ, whilst that they bring us unto Christ, as unto a fountain. But he cometh hither by little and little. For he doth not by and by in the beginning affirm that Jesus was Christ; but he saith only that he was a man sent of God; and that doth he prove by his miracles. Afterward he addeth, that he rose from death, when he was slain. Whereby it appeareth more certainly and more fully that he was not one of the prophets, but the very Son of God, who was promised to be the repairer of all things. Let this, therefore, be the first member, that Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God by manifest testimonies, so that he could not be despised as some base and obscure person. The old interpreter did not evil[1] translate ὑποδεδειγμενον *approved.* And Erasmus is deceived, who thinketh that he did read it otherwise; and he himself did not express Luke's mind, when as he translated it *given.*[2] For, seeing that word doth signify among the Grecians *to show,* whereupon the mathematicians also call those arguments whereby they set a thing, as it were, before a man's eyes, αποδειξεις, or *demonstrations,* Luke meant to say, that Jesus came not unknown, and without any testimony or approbation, but that those miracles which God showed by him served to this end, that he might

[1] "Male," ill, improperly. [2] "Exhibitum," exhibited.

be famous and excellent. Therefore he saith that he was showed toward the Jews; because God would have his Son to be accounted excellent and great among them; as if he should say, that miracles were not appointed for other nations, but for the Jews, that they might know that Jesus was sent unto them of God.

By great works. He calleth miracles by these three names. And because God doth show forth his power in them after a new and unwonted sort, or doth, at least, procure greater admiration, they are, for good causes, called *great works.*[1] For we are commonly more moved when any extraordinary thing doth happen. In which respect they are also called *wonders,*[2] because they make us astonished. And for this cause are they called *signs,* because the Lord will not have men's minds to stay there, but to be lifted up higher; as they are referred unto another end. He put in three words, to the end he might the more extol Christ's miracles, and enforce the people, by his heaping and laying of words together, to consider the same. Furthermore, he maketh not Christ the chief author, but only the minister; because, as we have already said, he determined to go forward by degrees. Notwithstanding, here may a question be asked, whether miracles do suffice to be a sufficient and just approbation [proof] or no? Because by this means inchanters might cause their legerdemain[3] to be believed. I answer, that the juggling casts of Satan do much differ from the power of God. Christ saith elsewhere, that the kingdom of Antichrist shall be in wonders, but he addeth by and by, *in lying wonders,* (2 Thess. ii. 9.) If any man object, that we cannot easily discern, because he saith that they shall have so great colour that they shall deceive (if it could be) the very elect; I answer again, that this error proceedeth only from our own want of wit, because we are so dull; for God doth show his power manifestly enough. Therefore, there is sufficient approbation of the

[1] "Virtutes." [2] "Prodigia," prodigies. [3] "Suis imposturis fidem facerent magi," magians might procure credit for their impo-tures.

doctrine and of the ministry in the miracles which God doth work, so that we be not blind. And whereas it is not of sufficient force among the wicked, because they may now and then be deceived with the false miracles of Satan, this must be imputed unto their own blindness; but whosoever hath a pure heart, he doth also know God with the pure eyes of his mind, so often as he doth show himself. Neither can Satan otherwise delude us, save only when, through the wickedness of our heart, our judgment is corrupt and our eyes blinded, or at least bleared through our own slothfulness.

23. *Him have ye slain.* He maketh mention of the death of Christ for this cause chiefly, that the resurrection might the more assuredly be believed. It was a thing full well known among the Jews that Christ was crucified. Therefore, in that he rose again, it is a great and wonderful token of his Divine power. In the mean season, to the end he may prick their consciences with the feeling of sin, he saith that they slew him; not that they crucified him with their own hands, but because the people, with one voice, desired to have him put to death. And although many of the hearers unto whom he speaketh did not consent unto that wicked and ungodly cruelty, yet doth he justly impute the same to the nation; because all of them had defiled themselves either with their silence, or else through their carelessness. Neither hath the cloak and colour[1] of ignorance any place, forasmuch as he was showed before of God. This guiltiness, therefore, under which he bringeth them, is a preparation unto repentance.

By the determinate counsel. He removeth a stumbling-block; because it seemeth, at the first blush, to be a thing very inconvenient, [unaccountable,] that that man whom God had so greatly adorned, being afterward laid open to all manner of mocking, doth suffer so reproachful a death. Therefore, because the cross of Christ doth commonly use to trouble us at the first sight, for this cause Peter declareth

[1] "Prætextus," pretext.

that he suffered nothing by chance, or because he wanted power to deliver himself, but because it was so determined (and appointed) by God. For this knowledge alone, that the death of Christ was ordained by the eternal counsel of God, did cut off all occasion of foolish and wicked cogitations, and did prevent all offences which might otherwise be conceived. For we must know this, that God doth decree nothing in vain or rashly; whereupon it followeth that there was just cause for which he would have Christ to suffer. The same knowledge of God's providence is a step to consider the end and fruit of Christ's death. For this meeteth us by and by in the counsel of God, that the just was delivered[1] for our sins, and that his blood was the price of our death.

And here is a notable place touching the providence of God, that we may know that as well our life as our death is governed by it. Luke intreateth, indeed, of Christ; but in his person we have a mirror, which doth represent unto us the universal providence of God, which doth stretch itself throughout the whole world; yet doth it specially shine unto us who are the members of Christ. Luke setteth down two things in this place, the *foreknowledge* and the *decree* of God. And although the foreknowledge of God is former in order, (because God doth first see what he will determine, before he doth indeed determine the same,) yet doth he put the same after the counsel and decree of God, to the end we may know that God would nothing, neither appointed anything, save that which he had long before directed to his [its] end. For men do oftentimes rashly decree many things, because they decree them suddenly. Therefore, to the end Peter may teach that the counsel of God is not without reason, he coupleth also therewithal his foreknowledge. Now, we must distinguish these two, and so much the more diligently, because many are deceived in this point. For passing over the counsel of God, wherewith he doth (guide and) govern the whole

[1] "Morti addictum," subjected to death.

world, they catch at his bare foreknowledge. Thence cometh that common distinction, that although God doth foresee all things, yet doth he lay no necessity upon his creatures. And, indeed, it is true that God doth know this thing or that thing before, for this cause, because it shall come to pass; but as we see that Peter doth teach that God did not only foresee that which befel Christ, but it was decreed by him. And hence must be gathered a general doctrine; because God doth no less show his providence in governing the whole world, than in ordaining and appointing the death of Christ. Therefore, it belongeth to God not only to know before things to come, but of his own will to determine what he will have done. This second thing did Peter declare when he said, that he was delivered by the certain and determinate counsel of God. Therefore, the foreknowledge of God is another thing than the will of God, whereby he governeth and ordereth all things.

Some, which are of quicker sight, confess that God doth not only foreknow, but also govern with his beck what things soever are done in this world. Nevertheless, they imagine a confused government, as if God did give liberty to his creatures to follow their own nature. They say that the sun is ruled by the will of God, because, in giving light to us, he doth his duty, which was once enjoined him by God. They think that man hath free-will after this sort left him, because his nature is disposed or inclined unto the free choice of good and evil. But they which think so do feign that God sitteth idle in heaven. The Scripture teacheth us far otherwise, which ascribeth unto God a special government in all things, and in man's actions. Notwithstanding, it is our duty to ponder and consider to what end it teacheth this; for we must beware of doting speculations, wherewith we see many carried away. The Scripture will exercise our faith, that we may know that we are defended by the hand of God, lest we be subject to the injuries of Satan and the wicked. It is good for us to embrace this one thing; neither did Peter mean anything else in this

place. Yea, we have an example set before us in Christ, whereby we may learn to be wise with sobriety. For it is out of question, that his flesh was subject to corruption, according to nature. But the providence of God did set the same free. If any man ask, whether the bones of Christ could be broken or no? it is not to be denied, that they were subject to breaking naturally, yet could there no bone be broken, because God had so appointed and determined, (John xix. 36.) By this example (I say) we are taught so to give the chiefest room to God's providence, that we keep ourselves within our bounds, and that we thrust not ourselves rashly and indiscreetly into the secrets of God, whither our eyesight doth not pierce.

By the hands of the wicked. Because Peter seemeth to grant that the wicked did obey God, hereupon followeth two absurdities;[1] the one, either that God is the author of evil, or that men do not sin, what wickedness soever they commit. I answer, concerning the second, that the wicked do nothing less than obey God, howsoever they do execute that which God hath determined with himself. For obedience springeth from a voluntary affection; and we know that the wicked have a far other purpose. Again, no man obeyeth God save he which knoweth his will. Therefore, obedience dependeth upon the knowledge of God's will. Furthermore, God hath revealed unto us his will in the law; wherefore, those men[2] do obey God, who do that alone which is agreeable to the law of God; and, again, which submit themselves willingly to his government. We see no such thing in all the wicked, whom God doth drive hither and thither, they themselves being ignorant. No man, therefore, will say that they are excusable under this colour, because they obey God; forasmuch as both the will of God must be sought in his law, and they, so much as in them lieth, do covet[3] to resist God. As touching the other point, I deny that God is the author of evil; because there is a certain noting of a wicked affection in this word. For the

[1] "Ex duobus absurdis alterutrum," one of two absurdities. [2] "Demum," only. [3] "Cupiant," desire.

wicked deed is esteemed according to the end whereat a man aimeth. When men commit theft or murder, they offend[1] for this cause, because they are thieves or murderers; and in theft and murder there is a wicked purpose. God, who useth their wickedness, is to be placed in the higher degree. For he hath respect unto a far other thing, because he will chastise the one, and exercise the patience of the other; and so he doth never decline from his nature, that is, from perfect righteousness. So that, whereas Christ was delivered by the hands of wicked men, whereas he was crucified, it came to pass by the appointment and ordinance of God. But treason, which is of itself wicked, and murder, which hath in it so great wickedness, must not be thought to be the works of God.

24. *Having loosed the sorrows of death.* By the sorrows of death I understand some farther thing than the bodily sense or feeling. For those which duly consider the nature of death, because they hear that it is the curse of God, must needs conceive that God is angry in death. Hence cometh marvellous horror, wherein there is greater misery than in death itself. Furthermore, Christ died upon this occasion that he might take upon him our guiltiness. That inward fear of conscience, which made him so afraid that he sweat blood when he presented himself before the throne and tribunal seat of God, did more vex him, and brought upon him greater horror, than all the torments of the flesh. And whereas Peter saith, that Christ did wrestle with such sorrows, and doth also declare that he had the victory, by this it cometh to pass that the faithful ought not now to be afraid of death; for death hath not the like quality now which was in Adam; because by the victory of Christ the curse is swallowed up, (1 Cor. xv. 54.) We feel, indeed, yet the pricking of sorrows, but such as do not wholly wound us, whilst that we hold up the buckler of faith against them. He added a reason, because it was impossible that Christ should be oppressed by death, who is the author of life.

[1] "Peccant," they sin.

25. *For David saith of him, I saw the Lord before me always, because he is on my right hand ; lest I should be moved.*
26. *For this my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad ; moreover, my flesh shall rest in hope :*
27. *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.*
28. *Thou hast made known unto me the ways of life, thou shalt fill me with gladness with thy face.*
29. *Men and brethren, seeing that I may boldly speak unto you of the patriarch David, because he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre remaineth with us until this day.*
30. *Therefore, seeing he was a prophet, and did know that God had sworn unto him with an oath that it should come to pass, that Christ should rise of the fruits of his loins, concerning the flesh, who should sit upon his throne ;*
31. *He knowing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption.*

25. The resurrection,[1] which was both declared and witnessed by certain and evident testimonies, and which might also have been gathered out of the continual doctrine of the prophets, was to be proved to the Jews as some new and strange thing. And no marvel. For we see that although Christ had oftentimes beat[2] the same into his disciples' heads, yet did they profit but a little. And yet did they retain certain principles of true doctrine, which might have made a way for them unto the knowledge of Christ, as we shall see by and by. Therefore, because the gift of the Spirit was a fruit of the resurrection of Christ, he proveth by the testimony of David that Christ must needs have risen again, that the Jews may thereby know that he was the author of the gift. For he taketh it as a thing which all men grant, that he was raised up from death, that he may live not for himself, but for his. Now we see Peter's drift; that that ought to seem no strange thing which was foretold so long before; and that Jesus is also Christ, because David did prophesy of him, as of the Head of the Church.

[1] "Christi," of Christ. [2] "Inculcasset," inculcated.

First of all, we must see whether this place ought altogether to be understood of Christ, as Peter affirmeth; that done, if there be any thing in the words worth noting, we will in order discuss it. Peter denieth that that agreeth with David which is said in this place: "Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," (Psalm xvi. 10,) because David's carcase was corrupt in the grave. It seemeth at the first blush to be but a light argument. For a man might easily object, that the word is not to be urged, forasmuch as David meant nothing else, save only to exempt himself from destruction. Therefore, howsoever corruption did touch him, yet doth that no whit hinder but that he may easily say that he was safe from the danger thereof, because he knew that the Lord would deliver him. Yea, it seemeth to be a repetition of the former sentence, according to the common custom of the Hebrew tongue. Which if it be so, the sense shall be plain, that God will not suffer him to be oppressed with death, or that death should consume him. And this interpretation is confirmed by that where we read *hell*, it is in Hebrew שְׁאוֹל, (*seol;*) where we read *corruption*, there it is שַׁחַת, (*shachat;*) both these words do signify the grave. By this means David should say twice, that he shall be delivered from death by the grace of God. Finally, he saith the same thing in this place, which he saith, (Psalm xlix. 15,) "God shall redeem my soul from the hand of hell." Like as, on the other side, when he speaketh of the reprobates, he is wont to take "*going* down into the grave" for destruction. I answer briefly, that there is some greater thing expressed in this place than the common redemption or deliverance of the godly. David, indeed, doth promise that God will be his eternal deliverer, as well in life as in death. Neither had he been much better for this, to have been once delivered from one danger, unless he had hoped that he should be safe even unto the end through God's protection; but he speaketh of such safety as is not common.[1] And surely the words do sound that he speaketh of some new and singular

[1] "Superiorem communi sorte," superior to the common lot.

privilege. Admit I grant that it is a repetition, and that there is all one thing uttered in these two members, "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell;" and, "Thou shalt not suffer me to see corruption;" yet do I deny that it is simply to be understood that God will deliver his Holy One from eternal destruction; for freedom from corruption is promised by name. Neither do I pass for this, that שחת (*shachat*) doth signify the grave, as סל, (*seol,*) which is put in the former member. For although I do not stand nor contend about the words, yet must we respect the etymology. Therefore, forasmuch as the grave is called שחת, (*shachat,*) because it doth corrupt man's body with rottenness, it is not to be doubted but that David meant to note that quality. Therefore, the place is not so much expressed by this word, as the condition of rotting. So that the sense is, that God will not suffer him of whom the Psalm speaketh "to rot or corrupt in the grave." And forasmuch as David was not free from this necessity, it followeth that the prophecy was neither truly nor perfectly fulfilled in him.

And that the Psalm ought altogether to be expounded of Christ, the thing itself doth prove. For seeing that David was one of the sons of Adam, he could not escape that universal condition and estate of mankind, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," (Gen. iii. 19;) the grave standeth open (I say) for all the children of Adam, that it may swallow them up, and consume them; so that no man can exempt himself from corruption. So that, beholding ourselves apart from Christ, we see the grave prepared for us, which threateneth to us corruption. Wherefore, if David be separated from Christ, that shall not belong to him which is here said, that he shall be preserved from the grave. Therefore, when he boasteth that he shall be free from the grave, as touching corruption, without all doubt he placeth himself in the body of Christ, wherein death was overcome, and the kingdom thereof abolished. But and if David do promise himself exempting from the grave in another respect, save only so far forth as he is a member of Christ, hereby it appeareth that this freedom must begin at Christ as at the

head. What man soever shall be of sound judgment shall easily know that this is a good argument. God did put all mankind under corruption; therefore, David, inasmuch as he was of the number of men, could not be free from the same. Neither is it to be doubted, but that the Jews, before whom this sermon was made, forasmuch as without question that maxim was of force amongst them, that they were to hope for the restoring of things at the hands of Christ alone, did the more readily stay themselves upon[1] the words of Peter; because they saw that that could no otherwise be which the words do import, unless they should apply it to the Messias. For they were not come to that point of impudence, at least those of whom mention is made here, that they durst cavil in matters which were evident; for God had then offered unto his disciples those which were godly hearers, and apt to be taught. They sought the Messias in the Old Testament. They knew that David was a figure of him. There was amongst them some religion and reverence of the Scriptures then; but now the impudency of all the whole nation almost is desperate. Howsoever they be urged, they wrench themselves out one way or other.[2] Where there is no way to escape, yet they break through; although they be overcome, yet will they not yield; neither is it to be doubted but that this their shameless forwardness is a punishment for their ungodliness. But let us return unto Peter's sermon.

Seeing that David doth not only affirm that God also shall be his deliverer, but doth express a singular way and means; namely, that he shall not be subject to the corruption of the grave, Peter doth for good causes gather, that that doth not properly appertain unto him, for that his body was corrupt in the grave. And now, because this had been somewhat hard to be spoken among the Jews, he mollifieth the hardness with a circumlocution. For he doth not flatly deny in one word that that was fulfilled indeed in David,

[1] "Acquieverint," acquiesced in. [2] "Eludunt," they evade, practise evasion.

but doth only by the way[1] signify so much unto them, because he lieth consumed in the grave after the common custom of other men. And David did so prophesy of Christ, that he did both apply this consolation unto himself privately, and also extend the same unto the whole body of the Church. For that which is sound and perfect in the head is spread abroad, being afterward poured out into all the members. Neither is it to be denied but that David spake of himself in this place; yet only so far forth as he beheld himself in Christ, as in the mirror of life. First, he hath respect unto Christ; after that he turneth his eyes toward himself, and others the faithful. So that we have a general doctrine prescribed unto us in this place, concerning the nature of faith, the spiritual joy of conscience, and the hope of eternal deliverance.

I saw. We must hold this principle. If we will have God present with us, we must set him before our eyes; and that before he do appear; for the prospect of faith pierceth far further than unto the present experience. Therefore faith hath this property, to set God always before it as a guide in all dangers and confused matters. For there is nothing that doth so much hold us up, as when we know that God is present with us; as the opinion of his absence doth often cast us down, and at length quite discourage us. David addeth, That he took not heed in vain unto the direction of God. "He is (saith he) at my right hand;" whereby he doth signify that we need not to fear lest we be deceived,[2] when as we set him before us at present; for we shall always feel his help most ready. Faith, in hoping for the help of God, ought to prevent and overgo[3] all experience, and whatsoever is perceived by the sense; but so soon as it shall give this glory to God, that it doth behold him in his Word, although he be absent, and so, consequently, invisible, it shall be overcome with the effect of the thing. For the measure of faith is not able to comprehend the infinite greatness of the power

[1] "Oblique," indirectly. [2] "Non esse periculum ne unquam nos ac fidem nostram frustratur," there is no danger of his deceiving us or our faith. [3] "Antevertere," outstrip.

and goodness of God. He draweth a similitude from those which, when they will underprop the weak, or strengthen the fearful, do join themselves unto their side. Not to be moved, is not to be thrown down from their degree, but to remain firm in their estate; like as also Psal. xlvi. 5, God is in the midst of it, therefore shall it not be moved. For although it come to pass sometimes that the godly be sore shaken, yet because they come to themselves again, they are said to continue firm. Therefore, there is no cause why they should be afraid of falling, who are upholden by the help of God. Like as, on the other side, those which place their strength anywhere else save only in God, they shall be like to fall at every blast of wind, but at any mean wind of temptation they shall fall to the ground.

26. *For this my heart rejoiced.* Joy of the soul, gladness of the tongue, and quietness of all the whole body, do ensue upon sure hope and confidence; for unless men be quite past feeling,[1] they must needs be careful and sorrowful, and so, consequently, miserably tormented, so long as they feel themselves destitute of the help of God. But that sure trust which we repose in God doth not only deliver us from carefulness,[2] but doth also replenish our hearts with wonderful joy (and gladness.) That is the joy which Christ promised to his disciples should be full in them, and which he testified could not be taken from them, (John xvi. 22; xvii. 13.) He expresseth the greatness of the joy when he saith, That it cannot be kept in, but that it will break forth into the gladness of the tongue.[3] כבוד doth signify, indeed, *glory*, but it is taken in that place, as in many others, for *the tongue*. And so the Grecians have truly translated the same. The rest of the *flesh* doth signify the quietness of the whole man, which we have through the protection of God. Neither is this any let, because the faithful are continually out of quiet and tremble; for as in the midst of sor-

[1] "Stupeant," be stupid or stunned. [2] "Anxietate," anxiety.
[3] "Quin erumpat in linguæ exultationem," but will burst forth into the language of exultation.

rows they do nevertheless rejoice; so there are no troubles so great that can break them of their rest. If any man object, that the peace of the faithful doth consist in the spirit, and that it is not in the flesh: I answer, that the faithful do rest in body; not that they are free from troubles, but because they believe that God careth for them wholly, and that not only their soul shall be safe through his protection, but their body also.

27. *Because thou shalt not leave.* To leave the soul in hell is to suffer the same to be oppressed with destruction. There be two words used in this place, both which do signify the grave amongst the Hebricians. Because שאול doth signify *to require*, I suppose it is called סול, because death is insatiable; whence also cometh that translation, Hell hath enlarged her soul. Again, they set open their mouth like hell. And because the latter שחת, is derived and set for *corruption*, or *consumption*, that quality is to be considered, as David meant to note the same. Those things which are disputed in this place by divers, concerning the descending of Christ into hell, are in my judgment superfluous; because they are far from the intent and purpose of the prophet. For the word *anima*, or *soul*, doth not so much signify the spirit being of an immortal essence as the life itself. For when a man is dead, and lieth in the grave, the grave is said to rule over his life. Whereas the Grecians translate it *holy*, it is in Hebrew חסד, which doth properly signify *meek*, or *gentle*, but Luke did not much regard this, because it doth not much appertain unto the present purpose. Furthermore, gentleness and meekness is so often commended in the faithful, because it behoveth them to imitate and resemble the nature of their Father.

28. *Thou hast made known.* He meaneth, that he was restored from death to life by the grace of God. For in that he was, as it were, a man raised from death to life, he acknowledgeth that it was a great good gift of God. This was in such sort fulfilled in Christ, that there wanted no-

thing unto perfection. As for the members they have their measure. Therefore Christ was far from corruption, that he may be the first-fruits of those which rise from death, (1 Cor. xv. 23.) We shall follow him in our order at length, but being first turned into dust, (1 Cor. xv. 42.) That which followeth, that *he was filled with gladness*, with the countenance of God, agreeth with that: Show us thy face, and we shall be safe. And, again, The light of thy countenance is showed upon us: thou hast put gladness in my heart. For it is only the pleasantness of God's countenance, which doth not only make us glad, but also quickens us; again, when the same is turned away, or troubled, we must needs faint.

30. *Therefore, seeing he was a prophet.* He showeth, by two reasons, that it is no marvel if David do speak of things that should come to pass long after his time; the former is, because he was a prophet. And we know that things to come, and such as are removed far from the knowledge of men, are revealed unto the prophets. Therefore, it were wickedness to measure their speeches according to the common manner and order which we use in measuring the speeches of other men, forasmuch as they go beyond the long courses of years, having the Spirit for their director. Whereupon they are also called seers; because being placed, as it were, upon an high tower,[1] they see those things which, by reason of great distance, are hidden from other men. Another reason is, because Christ was promised to him peculiarly. This maxim was so common amongst the Jews, that they had ever now and then the son of David in their mouth, so often as there was any mention made of Christ. They be no such arguments, I confess, as do necessarily prove that this prophecy is to be expounded of Christ; neither was that Peter's intent and purpose; but first he meant to prevent the contrary objection, whence David had such skill to foretell a

[1] "Specula," watch-tower.

thing which was unknown. Therefore he saith, That he knew Christ, both by prophetical revelation, and also by a singular promise. Furthermore, this principle was of great (Rom. x. 4) force amongst the better-minded sort which Paul setteth down, that Christ is the end of the law.[1] No man, therefore, did doubt of this, but that this was the mark whereat all the prophets did aim, to lead the godly unto Christ as it were by the hand. Therefore, what notable or extraordinary thing soever they did utter, the Jews were commonly persuaded that it did agree with Christ. Furthermore, we must note, that Peter doth reason soundly, when he gathered that David was not ignorant of that which was the chiefest point of all revelations.

He had sworn with an oath. God sware not only to the end he might make David believe his promise, but also that the thing promised might be had in greater estimation. And to this end, in my judgment, it is here repeated, that the Jews may think with themselves of what great weight the promise was, which God did make so notable (and so famous.) The same admonition is profitable for us also. For we need not to doubt of this, but that the Lord meant to set forth the excellency of the covenant by putting in a solemn oath. In the mean season, this is also a fit remedy for the infirmity of our faith, that the sacred name of God is set forth unto us,[2] that his words may carry the greater credit. These words, "according to the flesh," do declare that there was some more noble thing in Christ than the flesh. Therefore Christ did so come of the seed of David as he was man, that he doth, nevertheless, retain his divinity; and so the distinction between the two natures is plainly expressed; when as Christ is called the Son of God, according to his eternal essence, in like sort as he is called the seed of David according to the flesh.

32. *This Jesus hath God raised up; whereof we all are witnesses.*

[1] "Hoc principium quod Paulus tradit Christum esse finem legis," &c., this principle which Paul delivers, viz., that Christ was the end of the law, was of great force, &c. [2] "Pignoris instar," like a pledge, omitted.

33. *He being therefore exalted by the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Ghost of the Father, he hath now shed forth that which ye now see and hear.*
34. *For David is not ascended into heaven: But he saith, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand,*
35. *Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*
36. *Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for a surety, that God hath made this Jesus Lord, and the same Christ, whom ye have crucified.*

32. *This Jesus.* After that he had proved by the testimony of David, that it was most requisite that Christ should rise again, he saith, that he and the rest of his fellows were such witnesses as saw him with their eyes after his resurrection. For this text[1] will not suffer this word *raised up* to be drawn into any other sense. Whereupon it followeth that that was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth which David did foreshow concerning Christ. After that he intreateth of the fruit or effect. For it was requisite for him to declare that first, that Christ is alive. Otherwise it had been an absurd and incredible thing that he should be the author of so great a miracle. Notwithstanding he doth therewithal teach us, that he did not rise for his own sake alone, but that he might make the whole Church partaker of his life, having poured out the Spirit.

33. *He being therefore exalted by the right hand of God.* The right hand is taken in this place for the hand or power, in like sort as it is taken everywhere in the Scripture. For this is his drift, to declare that it was a wonderful work of God, in that he had exalted his Christ (whom men thought to be quite destroyed by death) unto so great glory.

The promise of the Spirit, for the Spirit which was promised. For he had oftentimes before promised the Spirit to his apostles. Therefore Peter doth signify, that Christ had obtained power of God the Father to fulfil the same. And he maketh mention of the promise in plain words, to the end the Jews may know that this came not to pass

[1] "Contextus," context.

suddenly, but that the words of the prophet were now verified, which went long time before the thing itself.

Furthermore, whereas it is said that he obtained it of *the Father*, it is to be applied to the person of the Mediator. For both these are truly said, that Christ sent the Spirit from himself and from the Father. He sent him from himself, because he is eternal God; from the Father, because in as much as he is man, he receiveth that of the Father which he giveth us. And Peter speaketh wisely according to the capacity of the ignorant, lest any man should move a question out of season concerning the power of Christ. And surely forasmuch as it is the office of Christ to direct us unto his Father, this is a most apt form of speaking for the use of godliness, that Christ being placed, as it were, in the midst between God and us, doth deliver unto us with his own hand those gifts which he hath received at the hands of his Father. Furthermore, we must note this order that he saith, that the Spirit was sent by Christ after that he was exalted. This agreeth with those sentences: "The Spirit was not yet given, because Christ was not yet glorified," (John vii. 39.) And again, "Unless I go hence, the Spirit will not come," (John xvi. 7.) Not because the Spirit began then first to be given, wherewith the holy fathers were endued since the beginning of the world; but because God did defer this more plentiful abundance of grace, until such time as he had placed Christ in his princely seat; which is signified by this word *poured out*, as we saw a little before. For by this means the force and fruit of Christ his death and resurrection is sealed; and we do also thereby know, that we have lost nothing by Christ his departing out of the world; because, though he be absent in body, yet is he present with us after a better sort, to wit, by the grace of his Holy Spirit.

34. *For doubtless David.* Although they might easily gather by the very effect which they saw with their eyes, that the principality was granted and given to Christ, yet to the end his glory may carry the greater credit, he

proveth, by David his testimony, that it was so appointed in times past by God, that Christ should be lifted up unto the highest degree of honour. For these words, to "sit at the right hand of God," import as much as to bear the chief rule, as we shall afterward more at large declare. Yet before he reciteth the prophecy, he saith that it agreeth only to Christ. Therefore, to the end the sense may be more manifest, the sentence must thus run. David pronounceth that it was decreed by God that a king should sit at his right hand. But this doth not appertain unto David, who was never extolled unto so great dignity. Therefore he speaketh this of Christ. Furthermore, that ought to have seemed no strange thing unto the Jews which was foretold by the oracle of the Holy Ghost. Hereby it appeareth in what sense Peter denieth that David ascended into heaven. He intreateth not in this place of the soul of David, whether it were received into blessed rest, and the heavenly dwelling or no; but the ascending into heaven comprehendeth under it those things which Paul teacheth in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the fourth chapter, ver. 9, where he placeth Christ above all heavens, that he may fulfil all things. Wherefore the disputation concerning the estate of the dead is altogether superfluous in this place. For Peter goeth about to prove no other thing but this, that the prophecy concerning the sitting at the right hand of God was not fulfilled in David, and that, therefore, the truth thereof must be sought elsewhere. And forasmuch as it can be found nowhere else save only in Jesus Christ, it resteth that the Jews[1] do know that that is showed to them in Christ which was foretold them so long before. That is true, indeed, that David reigned, God being the author hereof, and, in some respect, he was God's vicegerent; yet not so that he might be above all creatures. Wherefore, this sitting agreeth to none, unless he excel and be above all the whole world.

[1] "Prophetia admoniti," admonished by prophecy, omitted.

The Lord said unto my Lord. This is the most lawful manner of ruling, when as the king (or by what other title soever he be called) doth know that he is ordained of God, therefore David pronounceth that the commandment to reign was given unto Christ by name, (Psalm cx. 1.) As if he should say, He took not the honour to himself rashly, but did only obey God when he commanded him, (Heb. v. 5.) Now must we see whether Peter's reason be sound enough or no. He gathereth that the words concern Christ, because the sitting at the right hand of God doth not agree to David. It seemeth that this may be refuted, because David did reign by the peculiar commandment, name, and help of God; which is to sit at the right hand of God. But Peter taketh that for a thing which all men grant, which is true, and which I have already touched, that a greater and more royal government is here spoken of than that which David did enjoy. For howsoever he was God's vicegerent, and did, as it were, represent his person in reigning, yet is this power far inferior to that, to sit even at the right side of God. For this is attributed to Christ, because he is placed above all principality, and above every name that is named, both in this world, and in the world to come, (Ephes. i. 21.) Seeing that David is far inferior to the angels, he doth possess no such place that he should be counted next to God. For he must ascend far above all heavens, that he may come to the right hand of God. Wherefore no man is said to sit at it, rightly and properly, save only he which doth surpass all creatures in the degree of honour. As for him which is resident amongst the creatures, although he be reckoned in the order of angels, yet is he far from that highness. Again, we must not seek the right hand of God amongst the creatures; but it doth also surpass all heavenly principalities.

Furthermore, there is great weight even in the sentence itself. The king is commanded to bear the chiefest rule, until God have put all his enemies under his feet. Surely, although I grant that the name of such an honourable sit-

ting may be applied unto earthly lordship, yet do I deny that David did reign until such time as all his enemies were subdued. For we do hereby gather that the kingdom of Christ is eternal. But the kingdom of David was not only temporal, but also frail, and of a small continuance.

Moreover, when David died, he left many enemies alive here and there. He got many notable victories, but he was far from subduing all his enemies. He made many of those people which were round about him tributaries to him; some did he put to flight and destroyed; but what is all this unto all? Finally, we may prove by the whole text of the Psalm, that there can nothing else be understood save only the kingdom of Christ. That I may pass over other things, that which is here spoken touching the eternal priesthood is too far disagreeing from David's person. I know that the Jews do prattle, that kings' sons are called elsewhere *cohenim*. But he intreateth here of the priesthood as it is ascribed by Moses to the king Melchizedek. And there is established by a solemn oath a certain new kind of priesthood. And, therefore, we must not here imagine any common or ordinary thing. But it had been wickedness for David to thrust himself into any part of the priest's office. How should he then be called *cohen*, greater than Aaron, and consecrated of God for ever? But because I do not intend at this present to expound the whole Psalm, let this reason suffice which Peter bringeth, That he is made Lord of heaven and earth, which sitteth at the right hand of God. As touching the second member of the verse, read those things which I have noted upon the fifteenth chapter (1 Cor. xv. 25) of the former Epistle to the Corinthians, concerning the putting of his enemies under his feet.

36. *Therefore, let all the house of Israel know.* The house of Israel did confess that that Christ should come which was promised; yet did they not know who it was. Therefore, Peter concludeth, that Jesus, whom they had so spitefully handled, yea, whose name they did so greatly detest, is he

whom they ought to acknowledge to be their Lord, and whom they ought to reverence. For, (saith he,) God hath made him Lord and Christ; that is, you must look for none other than him whom God hath made and given. Furthermore, he saith, That he was made, because God the Father gave him this honour. He joineth the title Lord with the word Christ, because it was a common thing among the Jews, that the Redeemer should be anointed upon this condition, that he might be the Head of the Church, and that the chiefest power over all things might be given him. He speaketh unto the whole house of Israel; as if he should say, Whosoever will be reckoned among the sons of Jacob, and do also look for the promise, let them know for a surety, that this is he and none other. He useth the word *house*, because God had separated that name and family from all other people. And he saith ασφαλως, or for a surety, not only that they may repose their sure confidence and trust in Christ, but that he may take away all occasion of doubting from those which do oftentimes willingly doubt even of matters which are certain and sure. In the end of his oration he upbraideth unto them again, that they did crucify him, that being touched with greater grief of conscience, they may desire remedy.

And now, forasmuch as they know that Jesus is the Anointed of the Lord, the governor of the Church, and the giver of the Holy Ghost, the accusation hath so much the more force. For the putting of him to death was not only full of cruelty and wickedness, but also a testimony of outrageous disloyalty against God, of sacrilege and unthankfulness, and, finally, of apostacy. But it was requisite that they should be so wounded, lest they should have been slow to seek for medicine. And yet, notwithstanding, they did not crucify him with their own hands; but this is more than sufficient to make them guilty, in that they desired to have him put to death. And we also are accused by this same voice, if we crucify him in ourselves, being already glorified in heaven, making a mock of him, as saith the Apostle, (Heb. vi. 6.)

37. *And when they heard these things, they were pricked in heart, and said unto Peter and to the other apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

38. *Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

39. *For the promise appertaineth unto you, and unto your children, and unto all which are far off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call.*

37. *They were pricked in heart.* Luke doth now declare the fruit of the sermon, to the end we may know that the power of the Holy Ghost was not only showed forth in the diversity of tongues, but also in their hearts which heard. And he noteth a double fruit; first, that they were touched with the feeling of sorrow; and, secondly, that they were obedient to Peter's counsel. This is the beginning of repentance, this is the entrance unto godliness, to be sorry for our sins, and to be wounded with the feeling of our miseries. For so long as men are careless, they cannot take such heed unto doctrine as they ought. And for this cause the word of God is compared to a sword, (Heb. iv. 12,) because it doth mortify our flesh, that we may be offered to God for a sacrifice. But there must be added unto this pricking in heart readiness to obey. Cain and Judas were pricked in heart, but despair did keep them back from submitting themselves unto God, (Gen. iv. 13; Matth. xxvii. 3.) For the mind being oppressed with horror, can do nothing else but flee from God. And surely when David affirmeth that a contrite spirit and an humble heart is a sacrifice acceptable to God, he speaketh of voluntary pricking; forasmuch as there is fretting and fuming mixed with the prickings of the wicked. Therefore, we must take a good heart to us, and lift up our mind with this hope of salvation, that we may be ready to addict and give over ourselves unto God, and to follow whatsoever he shall command. We see many oftentimes pricked, who, notwithstanding, do fret and murmur, or else frowardly

strive and struggle, and so, consequently, go furiously mad. Yea, this is the cause why they go mad, because they feel such prickings against their will. Those men, therefore, are profitably pricked alone who are willingly sorrowful, and do also seek some remedy at God's hands.

38. *Peter said.* Hereby we see that those do never go away empty which ask at the mouth of the Lord, and do offer themselves unto him to be ruled and taught; for that promise must needs be true, Knock, and it shall be opened unto you, (Matth. vii. 7.) Therefore, whosoever shall be rightly prepared to learn, the Lord will not suffer his godly desire to be in vain; for he is a most faithful master, so that he hath scholars which are apt to be taught and studious. Wherefore, there is no cause why he should fear, lest he suffer us to be destitute of sound counsel, if we be attentive and ready to hear him, and do not refuse to embrace whatsoever he shall teach us. And let us suffer ourselves to be governed by the counsel and authority of those men whom he offereth unto us to teach us. For this ready obedience cometh thence so suddenly in those which addict themselves unto the apostles, because they are persuaded that they are sent of God, to show them the way of salvation.

Repent. There is greater force in the Greek word, for it doth signify the conversion of the mind, that the whole man may be renewed and made another man, which thing must be diligently noted, because this doctrine was miserably corrupted in the time of Popery; for they translated the name of repentance almost unto certain external rites. They babble somewhat, indeed, about the feigned contrition of the heart; but they touch that part very slightly, and they stand principally upon the external exercises of the body, which were little worth; yea, though there were in them no corruption; but they urge nothing else in a manner but feigned trifles, wherewith men are wearied in vain. Wherefore, let us know that this is the true repentance, when a man is renewed in the spirit of his mind, as Paul teacheth,

(Rom. xii. 2.) Neither need we to doubt of this; but that Peter did preach plainly of the force and nature of repentance; but Luke doth only touch the chief points, and doth not reckon up the words of the oration which he made. We must, therefore, know thus much, that Peter did at the first exhort the Jews unto repentance; and that done, he lifted them up with hope of pardon; for he promised them forgiveness of sins, which two things are the two parts of the gospel, as we know full well; and, therefore, when Christ will briefly teach what the doctrine of the gospel doth contain, he saith, that repentance and remission of sins (Luke xxiv. 47) must be preached in his name. Furthermore, because we are reconciled unto God only by the intercession of Christ's death, neither are our sins otherwise purged,[1] and done away, save only by his blood, therefore, Peter calleth us back unto him by name. He putteth baptism in the fourth place, as the seal whereby the promise of grace is confirmed.

Wherefore, we have in these few words almost the whole sum of Christianity, namely, how a man renouncing himself and taking his farewell of the world, may addict himself wholly to God; secondly, How he may be delivered by free forgiveness of sins, and so adopted into the number of the children of God. And forasmuch as we can obtain none of all these things without Christ, the name of Christ is therewithal set forth unto us, as the only foundation of faith and repentance. And we must also note this, that we do so begin repentance when we are turned unto God, that we must prosecute the same during our life; therefore, this sermon must continually sound in the Church, *repent*, (Mark i. 15;) not that those men may begin the same, who will be counted faithful, and have a place already in the Church; but that they may go forward in the same; although many do usurp the name of faithful men, which had never any beginning of repentance. Wherefore, we must observe this order in teaching, that those which do yet live unto the world and

[1] "Expiantur," expiated.

the flesh may begin to crucify the old man, that they may rise unto newness of life, and that those who are already entered the course of repentance may continually go forward towards the mark. Furthermore, because the inward conversion of the heart ought to bring forth fruits in the life, repentance cannot be rightly taught unless works be required, not those frivolous works which are only in estimation amongst the Papists, but such as are sound testimonies of innocence and holiness.

Be baptized every one of you. Although in the text and order of the words, baptism doth here go before remission of sins, yet doth it follow it in order, because it is nothing else but a sealing of those good things which we have by Christ, that they may be established in our consciences; therefore, after that Peter had intreated of repentance, he calleth the Jews unto the hope of grace and salvation; and, therefore, Luke well afterwards, in Paul's sermon, joineth faith and repentance together in the same sense, wherein he putteth forgiveness of sins in this place, and that for good considerations; for the hope of salvation consisteth in the free imputation of righteousness; and we are counted just, freely before God, when he forgiveth us our sins. And as I said before, that the doctrine of repentance hath a daily use in the Church, so must we think of the forgiveness of sins, that the same is continually offered unto us; and surely it is no less necessary for us during the whole course of our life, than at our first entrance into the Church, so that it should profit us nothing to be once received into favour by God, unless this embassage should have a continual course; be reconciled unto God, because "he which knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him," (2 Cor. v. 20.)

Moreover, the Papists do so corrupt this other part of the gospel, that they quite exclude the remission of sins, which was to be obtained by Christ. They confess that sins are freely forgiven in baptism, but they will have them redeemed with satisfactions after baptism; and although they mix the grace of Christ together therewithal, yet because they in-

wrap the same in men's merits, they do by this means overthrow the whole doctrine of the gospel; for, first, they take from men's consciences the certainty of faith; that done, forasmuch as they part the forgiveness of sins between the death of Christ and our satisfactions, they do altogether deprive us of Christ's benefit. For Christ doth not reconcile us unto God in part, but wholly, neither can we obtain remission of sins by him, unless it be whole and perfect. But the Papists are much deceived therein, who restrain baptism unto the nativity and former life, as if the signification and force thereof did not reach even unto death.

Let us know, therefore, that forgiveness of sins is grounded in Christ alone, and that we must not think upon any other satisfaction[1] save only that which he hath performed by the sacrifice of his death. And for this cause, as we have already said, doth Peter express his name, whereby he doth signify unto us, that none of all these things can be rightly taught, unless Christ be set in the midst, to the end the effect of this doctrine may be sought in him. That needeth no long exposition where he commandeth them to be baptized for the remission of sins; for although God hath once reconciled men unto himself in Christ "by not imputing unto them their sins," (2 Cor. v. 19,) and doth now imprint in our hearts the faith thereof by his Spirit; yet, notwithstanding, because baptism is the seal whereby he doth confirm unto us this benefit, and so, consequently, the earnest and pledge of our adoption, it is worthily said to be given us for the remission of sins. For because we receive Christ's gifts by faith, and baptism is a help to confirm and increase our faith, remission of sins, which is an effect of faith, is annexed unto it as unto the inferior mean. Furthermore, we must not fetch the definition of baptism from this place, because Peter doth only touch a part thereof. Our old man is crucified by baptism, as Paul teacheth, that we may rise unto newness of life, (Rom. vi. 4, 6.) And, again, we put on Christ himself, (1 Cor. xii.) and the Scripture teacheth

[1] "Expiatione," expiation.

every where, that it is also a sign and token of repentance, (Gal. iii. 27.) But because Peter doth not intreat in this place openly of the whole nature of baptism, but speaking of the forgiveness of sins, doth, by the way, declare that the confirmation thereof is in baptism, there doth no inconvenience follow, if ye do omit the other part.[1]

In the name of Christ. Although baptism be no vain figure, but a true and effectual testimony; notwithstanding, lest any man attribute that unto the element of water which is there offered, the name of Christ is plainly expressed, to the end we may know that it shall be a profitable sign for us then, if we seek the force and effect thereof in Christ, and know that we are, therefore, washed in baptism, because the blood of Christ is our washing; and we do also hereby gather, that Christ is the mark and end whereunto baptism directeth us; wherefore, every one profiteth so much in baptism as he learneth to look unto Christ. But here ariseth a question, Whether it were lawful for Peter to change the form prescribed by Christ? The Papists do think, at least feign so, and thence do they take a colour of liberty to change or abrogate the institutions of Christ. They confess that nothing ought to be changed, as touching the substance, but they will have the Church to have liberty to change whatsoever it will in the form. But this argument may easily be answered. For we must first know that Christ did not indite and rehearse unto his apostles magical words for enchanting, as the Papists do dream, but he did, in few words, comprehend the sum of the mystery. Again, I deny that Peter doth speak in this place of the form of baptism; but he doth simply declare that the whole strength[2] of baptism is contained in Christ; although Christ cannot be laid hold on by faith without the Father by whom he was given us, and the Spirit by the which he reneweth and sanctifieth us. The answer consisteth wholly in this, that he intreateth not in this place of the certain form of baptizing, but the

[1] "Nihil absurdi est si partem alteram prætereat," there is no absurdity, there is nothing strange in his omitting the other part. [2] "Virtutem," virtue or efficacy.

faithful are called back unto Christ, in whom alone we have whatsoever baptism doth prefigure unto us; for we are both made clean by his blood, and also we enter into a new life by the benefit of his death and resurrection.

Ye shall receive the gift of the Spirit. Because they were touched with wondering when they saw the apostles suddenly begin to speak with strange tongues, Peter saith that they shall be partakers of the same gift if they will pass over unto Christ. Remission of sins and newness of life were the principal things, and this was, as it were, an addition, that Christ should show forth unto them his power by some visible gift. Neither ought this place to be understood of the grace of sanctification, which is given generally to all the godly. Therefore he promiseth them the gift of the Spirit, whereof they saw a pattern in the diversity of tongues. Therefore this doth not properly appertain unto us. For because Christ meant to set forth the beginning of his kingdom with those miracles, they lasted but for a time; yet because the visible graces which the Lord did distribute to his did show, as it were in a glass, that Christ was the giver of the Spirit, therefore, that which Peter saith doth in some respect appertain unto all the whole Church: ye shall receive the gift of the Spirit. For although we do not receive it, that we may speak with tongues, that we may be prophets, that we may cure the sick, that we may work miracles; yet is it given us for a better use, that we may believe with the heart unto righteousness, that our tongues may be framed unto true confession, (Rom. x. 10,) that we may pass from death to life, (John v. 24,) that we, which are poor and empty, may be made rich, that we may withstand Satan and the world stoutly. Therefore, the grace of the Spirit shall always be annexed unto baptism, unless the let be in ourselves.

39. *For the promise appertaineth unto you.* It was requisite that this should be expressly added, that the Jews might certainly think and persuade themselves that the grace of Christ did belong as well to them as to the apostles. And

Peter proveth it thus, because the promise of God was made unto them. For we must always look unto this, because [that] we cannot otherwise know the will of God save only by his word. But it is not sufficient to have the general word, unless we know that the same is appointed for us. Therefore Peter saith, that those benefits which they see in him and his fellows in office were in times past promised to the Jews; because this is required necessarily for the certainty of faith, that every one be fully persuaded of this, that he is comprehended in the number of those unto whom God speaketh. Finally, this is the rule of a true faith, when I am thus persuaded that salvation is mine, because that promise appertaineth unto me which offereth the same. And hereby we have also a greater confirmation, when as the promise is extended unto those who were before afar off. For God had made the covenant with the Jews, (Exod. iv. 22.) If the force and fruit thereof come also unto the Gentiles, there is no cause why the Jews should doubt of themselves, but that they shall find the promise of God firm and stable.

And we must note these three degrees, that the promise was first made to the Jews, and then to their children, and last of all, that it is also to be imparted to the Gentiles. We know the reason why the Jews are preferred before other people; for they are, as it were, the first begotten in God's family, yea, they were then separated from other people by a singular privilege. Therefore Peter observeth a good order, when he giveth the Jews the pre-eminence. Whereas he adjoineth their children unto them, it dependeth upon the words of the promise: I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee, (Gen. xvii. 7,) where God doth reckon the children with the fathers in the grace of adoption.

This place, therefore, doth abundantly refute the manifest error of the Anabaptists, which will not have infants, which are the children of the faithful, to be baptized, as if they were not members of the Church. They espy a starting hole in the allegorical sense,[1] and they expound it thus, that by children

[1] "Effugium in allegorico sensu captant," they attempt evasion by giving an allegorical meaning.

are meant those which are spiritually begotten. But this gross impudency doth nothing help them. It is plain and evident that Peter spake thus because God did adopt one nation peculiarly. And circumcision did declare that the right of adoption was common even unto infants. Therefore, even as God made his covenant with Isaac, being as yet unborn, because he was the seed of Abraham, so Peter teacheth, that all the children of the Jews are contained in the same covenant, because this promise is always in force, I will be the God of your seed.

And to those which are afar off. The Gentiles are named in the last place, which were before strangers. For those which refer it unto those Jews which were exiled afar off, (and driven) into far countries, they are greatly deceived. For he speaketh not in this place of the distance of place; but he noteth a difference between the Jews and the Gentiles, that they were first joined to God by reason of the covenant, and so, consequently, became of his family or household; but the Gentiles were banished from his kingdom. Paul useth the same speech in the second chapter to Ephesians, (Eph. ii. 11,) that the Gentiles, which were strangers from the promises, are now drawn near, through Jesus Christ, unto God. Because that Christ (the wall of separation being taken away) hath reconciled both (the Jews and Gentiles) unto the Father, and coming, he hath preached peace unto those which were nigh at hand, and which were afar off. Now we understand Peter's meaning. For to the end he may amplify the grace of Christ, he doth so offer the same unto the Jews, that he saith the Gentiles are also partakers thereof. And therefore he useth this word *call*, as if he should say: Like as God hath gathered you together into one peculiar people heretofore by his voice, so the same voice shall sound everywhere, that those which are afar off may come and join themselves unto you, when as they shall be called by a new proclamation.

40. *And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Be ye saved from this froward generation.*

41. *Those, therefore, which willingly embraced his words were baptized: and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

42. *And they continued in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers.*

40. *And with many.* Although in these things which we have had hitherto, Luke did not recite the words of St Peter, but did only briefly touch the chief points; notwithstanding he telleth us again in this place, that Peter did not use doctrine only, but did add the pricks of exhortations. And he expresseth plainly that he stood much[1] hereupon. Whereas he saith, that he did exhort and beseech, he noteth therein his earnestness. For it was not so easy a matter for them by and by[2] to take their leave of those errors wherewith they were of late infected, and to shake off the government of the priests whereunto they were accustomed. Therefore it stood him upon to pull them violently out of this mire. The sum was this, that they should beware of that froward generation. For they could not be Christ's unless they would depart from his professed enemies. The priests and scribes were then in great authority, and forasmuch as they did cover themselves under the visor [mask] of the Church, they did deceive the simple. This did hinder and keep back a great many from coming to Christ. Also some might waver, and other some might fall away from the right faith. Therefore Peter plainly declareth that they are a froward generation, howsoever they may boast of the title of the Church. For which cause he commandeth his hearers to separate themselves from them, lest they entangle themselves in their wicked and pestiferous fellowship. Whereas he saith, Be ye saved, he signifieth unto them that they shall surely perish if they couple themselves with such a plague. And surely experience doth teach us, how miserably those men are tossed to and fro who cannot discern the voice of their pastor from the voice of other men;[3] and again, what

[1] "Multum institisse," insisted much.
[2] "Protinus," forthwith,
[3] "Alienorum," of strangers or aliens.

an hindrance softness and sluggishness is to a great many, whilst they desire to stand in a doubt.[1] Therefore he commandeth them to depart from the wicked if they will be saved. And this point of doctrine is not to be neglected. For it were not sufficient to have Christ set before us, unless we were also taught to flee those things which do lead us away from him. And it is the duty of a good shepherd to defend his sheep from the wolves. So at this day, to the end we may keep the people in the sincere doctrine of the gospel, we are ever now and then enforced to show and testify how much Papistry differeth from Christianity, and what a hurtful plague it is to be yoked with the unfaithful enemies of Christ. Neither ought Peter to be accused of railing, because he calleth the reverend fathers, who had the government of the Church[2] in their hands at that day, a *froward generation*. For those dangers which may draw the soul unto destruction are to be showed by their names. For men will not beware of poison, unless they know that it is poison.

41. *They, therefore, which willingly.* Luke showeth more plainly how fruitful this one sermon which Peter made was: to wit, that it gained unto Christ about three thousand men. And therewithal he declareth the nature and force of faith, when he saith, that with a prompt and ready[3] mind they embraced his word. Therefore, faith must begin with this readiness and willing desire to obey. And because many do show themselves at the first very willing, who afterward have in themselves no constancy or continuance, lest we should think that it was some sudden pang[4] which by and by fell away, Luke doth also afterward commend their constancy, who (as he said) did willingly embrace this word of the apostles, showing that they were joined unto the disciples, or that they were engrafted into the same body, and that they continued in their doctrine. Therefore we must

[1] "Medii stare," to hold a middle course, remain undecided.
[2] "Ordinarium Ecclesiæ regimen," the ordinary government of the Church. [3] "Hilari," cheerful. [4] "Impetum," impulse.

neither be slow to obey, nor yet swift to leap back; but we must stick fast, and stand stoutly to that doctrine which we did forthwith (without any tarriance [delay]) embrace. Furthermore, this example ought to make us not a little ashamed. For whereas there was a great multitude converted unto Christ with one sermon, an hundred sermons can scarce move a few of us; and whereas Luke saith that they continued, there is scarce one amongst ten that doth show even a mean desire to profit and go forward, yea, rather, the more part doth soon loathe our doctrine. Woe be, therefore, to the sluggishness and lightness of the world!

42. *In their doctrine.* Luke doth not only commend in them the constancy of faith or of godliness, but he saith, also, that they did constantly give themselves to those exercises which serve to the confirmation of faith; to wit, that they studied continually to profit by hearing the apostles; that they gave themselves much to prayer; that they did use fellowship and breaking of bread very much.

As touching prayer and doctrine the sense is plain. Communication or fellowship, and breaking of bread, may be taken diversely. Some think that breaking of bread doth signify the Lord's Supper; other some do think that it signifieth alms; other some that the faithful did banquet together[1] among themselves. Some do think that κοινωνια doth signify the celebrating of the Holy Supper; but I do rather agree to those others who think that the same is meant by the breaking of bread. For κοινωνια, unless it have somewhat added unto it, is never found in this sense; therefore, I do rather refer it unto mutual society and fellowship, unto alms, and unto other duties of brotherly fellowship. And my reason why I would rather have breaking of bread to be understood of the Lord's Supper in this place is this, because Luke doth reckon up those things wherein the public estate of the Church is contained. Yea, he expresseth in this place four marks whereby the true and natural face of the Church

[1] "Communiter," in common.

may be judged. Do we then seek the true Church of Christ? The image thereof is lively depainted and set forth[1] unto us in this place. And he beginneth with doctrine which is, as it were, the soul of the Church. Neither doth he name all manner of doctrine, but the doctrine of the apostles, that is, that which the Son of God had delivered by their hands. Therefore, wheresoever the pure voice of the gospel doth sound, where men continue in the profession thereof, where they exercise themselves in hearing the same ordinarily that they may profit, without all doubt there is the Church.

Hereby we may easily gather how frivolous the boasting of the Papists is, whilst that they carelessly[2] thunder out with full mouth the name of the Church; whereas, notwithstanding, they have most filthily corrupted the doctrine of the apostles. For if it be duly examined, we shall find no sound part at all; and in most points they do as much dissent from the same, and have as little agreement therewith as light with darkness. The rule of worshipping God, which ought to be fetched out of the pure Word of God alone, is only made and patched together[3] amongst the Papists, of the superstitious inventions of men. They have translated unto the merits of works the hope of salvation, which ought to have rested in Christ alone. The invocation of God is altogether polluted with innumerable profane dotings of men. Finally, whatsoever is heard amongst them, it is either a deforming of the apostles' doctrine, or else a clear overthrowing (and destroying) of the same. Therefore, we may as easily refute the foolish arrogancy of the Papists, as they can cloak their dealings with the title of the Church. For this shall be the state,[4] whether they have retained the purity of doctrine, from which they are as far as hell is from heaven. But they are wise enough in that point, because they will have no controversy moved about doctrine. But we, as I have said, may freely contemn that vain visor, [mask,] forasmuch as the Spirit of God doth pronounce

[1] "Ad vivum depicta," painted to the life. [2] "Secure," confidently.
[3] "Conflata est," compounded. [4] "Hic enim erit status," for the state (of the question) shall be.

that the Church is principally to be (esteemed and) discerned by this mark, if the simplicity or purity of the doctrine delivered by the apostles do flourish (and be of force) in the same.

In fellowship. This member and the last do flow from the first, as fruits or effects. For doctrine is the bond of brotherly fellowship amongst us, and doth also set open unto us the gate unto God, that we may call upon him. And the Supper is added unto doctrine instead of a confirmation. Wherefore, Luke doth not in vain reckon up these four things, when as he will describe unto us the well-ordered state of the Church. And we must endeavour to keep and observe this order, if we will be truly judged to be the Church before God and the angels, and not only to make boast of the name[1] thereof amongst men. It is certain that he speaketh of public prayer. And for this cause it is not sufficient for men to make their prayers at home by themselves, unless they meet altogether to pray; wherein consisteth also the profession of faith.

43. *And there came fear upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were wrought by the apostles.*
44. *And all those which believed were joined together, and had all things common.*
45. *And they sold their possessions and substance, and did part them to all men, as every man had need.*

43. *And there came.* He signifieth unto us that the show and sight of the Church was such, that it made others afraid which did not consent unto [its] doctrine; and that was done for the preserving and furthering of the Church. When there ariseth any sect, all men set themselves stoutly against the same; and as novelty is odious, the Jews would never have suffered the Church of Christ to stand one minute of an hour,[2] unless the Lord had restrained them with fear as with a bridle. Furthermore, Luke noteth the manner of fear, that it was no such fear as bringeth men unto the obedience

[1] "Inane...nomen," the empty name. [2] "Momentum," moment.

of Christ, but such as causeth men to stand in a doubt, and so, consequently, doth, as it were, so bind them hand and foot,[1] that they dare not hinder the Lord's work. Like as there be some at this day who will willingly be ignorant of the gospel; or, at least, are so holden[2] with the cares of this world, that they cannot thoroughly join themselves unto Christ; and yet they are not so hard-hearted but that they confess that the truth is on our side; and, therefore, they rest, as it were, in the middle way, neither do they favour the cruelty of the wicked, because they are afraid to strive against God. And whereas he saith, *Every soul*, he speaketh thus by *synecdoche*. For it is certain that many did contemn the hand of God, and that other some were stricken with no great fear, but that they did furiously rage together against the Church.[3] But Luke's meaning was this, that there appeared such power of God in the Church, that the people for the most part had not one word to say.[4]

And many wonders. This member serveth also to the showing of the cause. For the miracles served to make them afraid, together with other works of God, although this was not the only reason, but one of many, why they were afraid to set themselves against God, who was on that side, as they did gather by the miracles; whence we gather that they are not only profitable for this to bring men to God,[5] but also to make the wicked somewhat more gentle, and that they may tame their furiousness. Pharaoh was a man of desperate stubbornness, (Exod. viii. 8, &c. 19,) and yet we see how miracles do sometimes pierce his obstinate heart. He forgetteth them by and by; but when the hand of God is heavy upon him, he is compelled through fear to yield. To be brief, Luke teacheth that the Jews were by this means kept back, that the Church, which might easily have been destroyed, might have got up her head.[6] Which

[1] "Sed qui suspensos tenet adeoque constrictos," but which keeps them in suspense and restrained. [2] "Impliciti," entangled. [3] "Alios nullo metu fuisse deterritos quin furiose adversus Ecclesiam sævirent," that others were not deterred by any fear from raging against the Church.
[4] "Obmutesceret," stood dumb. [5] "In obsequium Dei," into obedience to God. [6] "Emergeret," might emerge, or raise her head.

thing we have oftentimes tried[1] even in our time. And he doth not only declare that they were bridled with fear, lest they should be so bold as to attempt so much as they lusted to do hurt to the Church, but that they were also humbled with reverence to the glory of the gospel.

44. *And all.* Whereas I have translated it *joined together*, it is word for word in St Luke, *Into the same, or into one*, which may be expounded of the place; as if he should have said that they were wont to dwell together in one place. Notwithstanding, I had rather understand it of their consent (and agreement;) as he will say in the fourth chapter, "That they had one heart," (Acts iv. 32.) And so he goeth forward orderly, when, as he beginneth with their mind, he addeth afterward their bountifulness, as a fruit proceeding thence. Therefore, he giveth us to understand that they were rightly joined together with brotherly love amongst themselves, and that they did indeed declare the same, because the rich men did sell their goods that they might help the poor. And this is a singular example of love, and therefore doth Luke record the same, to the end we may know that we must relieve the poverty of our brethren with our plenty.

But this place hath need of a sound exposition, because of fantastical [fanatical] spirits, which do feign a commonalty or participation together of goods, whereby all policy or civil government is taken away; as in this age the Anabaptists have raged, because they thought there was no Church unless all men's goods were put and gathered together, as it were, in one heap, that they might all one with another take thereof. Wherefore, we must in this point beware of two extremes. For many, under colour of policy, do keep close and conceal whatsoever they have; they defraud the poor, and they think that they are twice righteous, so they take away no other men's goods. Other some are carried into the contrary error, because they would have all

[1] "Subinde sumus experti," Have ever and anon experienced.

things confused. But what doth Luke? Surely he noteth another order, when he saith that there was choice made in the distribution. If any man object that no man had any thing which was his own, seeing all things were common, we may easily answer. For this community or participation together must be restrained unto the circumstance which ensueth immediately; to wit, that the poor might be relieved as every man had need. We know the old proverb, "All things are common amongst friends." When as the scholars of Pythagoras said thus, they did not deny but that every man might govern his own house privately, neither did they intend to make their own wives common; so this having of things common, whereof Luke speaketh, and which he commendeth, doth not take away household government; which thing shall better appear by the fourth chapter, whereas he nameth two alone which sold their possessions of so many thousands. Whence we gather that which I said even now, that they brought forth and made common their goods in no other respect, save only that they might relieve the present necessity. And the impudency of the monks was ridiculous, who did profess that they did observe the apostles' rule, because they call nothing their own; and yet, nevertheless, they neither sell any thing, neither yet do they pass for any man's poverty;[1] but they stuff their idle bellies with the blood of the poor, neither do they regard any other thing in their having of things common, save only that they may be well filled and daintily, although all the whole world be hungry. Wherein, then, are they like to the first disciples, with whom they will be thought to be able to compare?[2]

46. *And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart,*

47. *Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added daily unto the congregation those which should be saved.*

[1] "Nec solliciti sunt si quisquam egeat," nor are solicitous if any man want.
[2] "Quorum æmuli haberi volunt," whose rivals they would be thought.

46. *Continuing in the temple.* We must note that they did frequent the temple for this cause, because there was more opportunity and occasion offered there to further the gospel. Neither were they drawn with the holiness of the place, seeing they knew that the shadows of the law were ceased; neither meant they to draw others by their example to have the temple in any such reverence;[1] but because there was there great concourse of people, who having laid aside their private cares, wherewith they had been drawn away elsewhere,[2] did seek the Lord; they were continually in the temple, that they might gain such unto Christ. There might be another reason which might induce them hereunto, that they might have a mutual conference and imparting of doctrine amongst themselves, which they could not have done so conveniently in a private house, especially seeing they were so many.

Breaking bread from house to house. Luke signifieth unto us, that they did not only show some token of true godliness publicly, but that the course and tenor of their private life was alone in that respect. For whereas some do think that in this place, by breaking of bread is meant the Holy Supper, it seemeth to me that Luke meant no such thing. He signifieth, therefore, unto us, that they used to eat together, and that thriftily.[3] For those which make sumptuous banquets do not eat their meat together so familiarly. Again, Luke addeth, *in singleness of heart;* which is also a token of temperance. In sum, his meaning is to declare, that their manner of living was brotherly and sober. Some do join simplicity and gladness with the praise of God; and both texts may well be allowed.[4] But because there can be no singleness of heart in praising God, unless the same be also in all parts of the life, therefore it is certain, that there is mention made thereof in this sense, that the faith-

[1] "Ad templi cultum," to worship the temple. [2] "Quibus alibi magis distracti fuissent," with which elsewhere they might have been more distracted. [3] "Frugaliter," frugally. [4] "Et probabilis est uterque contextus," and the context makes this probable.

ful did always use the same in all places.[1] And we must also note the circumstance of time, that, being environed and beset with many dangers, they were merry and joyful. The knowledge of God's love toward us, and the hope of his protection, do bring us this goodness with them, that we praise God with quiet minds, whatsoever the world doth threaten. And as Luke spake a little before of the public estate of the Church, so he declareth now what form and manner of life the faithful did use; that we may learn by their example a thrifty fellowship in our manner of living, and in all our whole life to embrace singleness, to enjoy the spiritual joy, and to exercise ourselves in the praises of God. Furthermore, the singleness of heart reacheth far; but if you join it in this place with breaking of bread, it shall signify as much as sincere love, where one man dealeth plainly with another, neither doth any man craftily hunt after his own profit. Yet had I rather set the same against that carefulness, wherewith worldly men[2] do too much torment themselves. For when as we do not cast our care upon the Lord, this reward hangeth over our heads, that we tremble and quake even when we take our rest.

47. *Having favour.* This is the fruit of an innocent life, to find favour even amongst strangers. And yet we need not to doubt of this, but that they were hated of many. But although he speak generally of the people, yet he meaneth that part alone which was sound, neither yet infected with any poison of hatred; he signifieth briefly, that the faithful did so behave themselves, that the people did full well like of them for their innocency of life.[3]

The Lord added daily. He showeth in these words that their diligence was not without profit; they studied so much as in them lay to gather into the Lord's sheepfold those which wandered and went astray. He saith that their labour bestowed herein was not lost; because the Lord did

[1] "Eam ubique coluerunt," did cultivate it everywhere. [2] "Providi homines," the provident, or over-careful. [3] "Populo grati atque probati essent," that they were agreeable to, and approved by, the people.

increase his Church daily. And surely, whereas the Church is rather diminished than increased, that is to be imputed to our slothfulness, or rather frowardness.[1] And although they did all of them stoutly labour to increase the kingdom of Christ, yet Luke ascribeth[2] this honour to God alone, that he brought strangers into the Church. And surely this is his own proper work. For the ministers do no good by planting or watering, unless he make their labour effectual by the power of his Spirit, (1 Cor. iii.) Furthermore, we must note that he saith, that those were gathered unto the Church which should be saved. For he teacheth that this is the means to attain salvation, if we be incorporate into the Church. For like as there is no remission of sins, so neither is there any hope of salvation.[3] Furthermore, this is an excellent comfort for all the godly, that they were received into the Church that they might be saved; as the Gospel is called the power of God unto salvation to all that believe, (Rom. i. 16.) Now, forasmuch as God doth gather only a part, or a certain number, this grace is restrained unto election, that it may be the first cause of our salvation.

CHAPTER III.

1. *Now, [or almost at that time,] Peter and John went up together into the temple, about the ninth hour of prayer.*
2. *Furthermore, a certain man, which was lame from his mother's womb, was carried; whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, that he might ask alms of those which entered into the temple.*
3. *When he saw Peter and John draw near to the temple, he asked an alms.*

[1] "Pravitati," wickedness. [2] "Vendicat," claimeth. [3] "Extra eam," out of it, (the Church,) omitted.

4. *And Peter, beholding him earnestly with John, said, Look on us.*
5. *And he gave heed unto them, thinking that he should receive somewhat of them.*
6. *And Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk.*
7. *And when he had taken him by the right hand, he lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength.*
8. *And leaping up he stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.*
9. *And all the people saw him walking, and praising God.*
10. *And they knew him, that it was he which was wont to sit for the alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple. And they were filled with wondering, and were astonied at that thing which was come unto him.*
11. *Moreover, when the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran amazed unto them, into the Porch which is called Solomon's.*

1. We saw before that many signs were showed by the hands of the apostles; now Luke reciteth one of many for example's sake, after his common custom; namely, that a lame man, which was lame of his feet from his mother's womb, was perfectly restored to his limbs. And he doth diligently gather all the circumstances which serve to set forth the miracle. If it had been that his legs had been out of joint, or if it had been some disease coming by some casualty, it might have been the more easily cured. But the default of nature[1] could not have been so easily redressed. When as he saith that he was carried, we gather thereby that it was no light halting, but that this man did lie as if his legs had been dead. Forasmuch as he was wont daily to ask alms, hereby all the people might the better know him. In that being healed, he walked in the temple at the time of prayer, this served to spread abroad the fame of the miracle. Furthermore, this doth not a little

[1] "Naturæ autem vitium," but a natural defect.

set forth the same, that being lifted up and set upon his feet, he leapeth up therewithal, and walketh joyfully.

Went up together. Because these words, επι το αυτο, doth no more signify place than time, this latter sense seemeth better to agree with the text of Peter, yet, because it is of no great importance, I leave it indifferent. That it is called the ninth hour of prayer, when as the day began to draw towards night.[1] For seeing the day from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof had twelve hours, as I have said elsewhere, all that time was divided into four parts. So that by the ninth is meant the last portion of the day; as the first hour did continue unto the third, the third unto the sixth, the sixth unto the ninth. Hence may we gather, by a probable conjecture, that that hour was appointed for the evening sacrifice. Furthermore, if any man ask, whether the apostles went up into the temple that they might pray according to the rite of the law, I do not think that that is a thing so likely to be true, as that they might have better opportunity to spread abroad the gospel. And if any man will abuse this place, as if it were lawful for us to use and take up superstitious worshippings, whilst that we are conversant amongst the ignorant and weak, his reason shall be frivolous. The Lord appointed that the Jews should offer sacrifice morning and evening, (Exod. xxix. 41.) By this exercise were they taught to begin and end the day with calling upon the name of God, and with worshipping him,[2] (Num. xxviii. 2.) Therefore Peter and John might freely come into the temple, which was consecrated to God; neither did they pollute themselves, seeing they called upon the God of Israel, that they might thereby declare their godliness. First, in that the Lord would have the older people to observe the appointed hours,[3] we gather thereby that the Church cannot be without certain discipline. And even at this day, were it profitable for us to have such meetings daily, unless our too

[1] "Ad vesperum," towards evening.

[2] "Ab invocatione et cultu Dei," with invocation and worship of God.

[3] "Statas horas," stated hours.

[too] much sluggishness did let us. And whereas the apostles go up at that hour, hereby we gather that we must foreslow [neglect] no opportunity that is offered us for the furtherance of the gospel.

3. *He asketh an alms.* We see how God restored this lame man to his limbs contrary to his expectation. Because he thought that his disease was incurable, he was only careful for maintenance. That is given him which he durst never have asked. In like sort God doth oftentimes prevent us, neither doth he stay until he be provoked.[1] And hence can we not gather any occasion of slothfulness, as if the Lord did therefore meet us of his own accord, that being idle and slothful we may suffer the Lord to do good unto us. For we are commanded to pray, and therefore let us not foreslow [neglect] our duty.[2] But, first of all, under the person of the lame man, we have set before us an example of a man that is not yet illuminated by faith, that he may know how to pray aright. Such doth God prevent, as it is needful, even of his own accord. Therefore, when as he restoreth our souls not only to health, but also to life, he himself is to himself the cause hereof. For this is the beginning of our calling, that he may make those things to be which are not; that he may show himself unto those who seek not after him, (Rom. iv. 17.) Furthermore, howsoever we be already taught by faith to pray unto God, yet, because we do not always feel our miseries, it cometh not into our mind to seek for remedy; therefore the Lord bringeth the same freely and unlooked for. Finally, howsoever we be bent to pray, yet doth he exceed our hope and petitions with his goodness.

4. *Look upon us.* Peter doth not thus speak before he be certain of the purpose and intent of God. And surely in these words he commandeth him to hope for some singular and unwonted benefit; yet here may a question be moved,

[1] "A nobis provocetur," until he is urged by us. [2] "Partes nostras non omittamus," let us not omit our part.

whether they had power to work miracles so often as they would? I answer, that they were ministers of God's power in such sort, that they did attempt nothing of their own will or proper motion, but the Lord wrought by them, when he knew that it was expedient it should be so. Hereby it came to pass that they healed one and not all. Therefore, as in other things, they had the Spirit of God to be their guide and director, so also in this point. Therefore, before such time as Peter commandeth the lame man to arise, he did cast and fasten his eyes upon him; this stedfast looking upon him was not without some peculiar motion of the Spirit. Hereby it cometh to pass that he speaketh so surely (and safely, without all fear) of the miracle. Furthermore, he meant by this word to provoke the lame man to receive the grace of God; yet doth he look for nothing but for an alms.

6. *Silver and gold.* Peter doth truly excuse himself, that he doth want that help which the lame man did require. And therefore doth he declare, that if he were able to relieve his poverty he would willingly do it; like as every man ought to consider with himself what the Lord hath given him, that he may therewith help his neighbours. For what store soever God giveth to every man, he will have the same to be an instrument and help to exercise love. Therefore he saith, that he giveth that which he hath. This was at the first a trick of mockage,[1] in that Peter beginneth to speak of his poverty, after that he had brought the lame man into a rare hope, as if he meant to mock a gaping crow; but he comforteth him immediately, to the end the miracle might be had in greater estimation by the comparison. That is horrible wickedness, in that the Pope, when as he is created, doth most unshamefastly [shamelessly] abuse this place, making thereof a comical, or rather a scoffing play. There be two cells, or places made of stone, in the one whereof when he sitteth, and the people ask an alms, using these words of

[1] "Principio quidem erat hoc elusorium," at first, indeed, this was illusory.

Peter, he casteth abroad crosses in the air with his fingers. When he is brought into the next cell, or place, he hath bags full of money. Then his angels cry unto him, "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor," (Psal. cxii. 9.) I have made mention hereof, to the end all men may see that Satan doth questionless reign there, where they do so manifestly mock the sacred Word of God. And to the end I may return unto the former sentence, it is evident enough that Peter was instructed by a certain and sure revelation, when as he saith that he hath the gift of healing.

In the name of Jesus. He saith that this is the work and benefit of Christ, that he restoreth to the cripple the use of his feet, for *name* is taken for power and empire, or government. Neither must we dream that there is any magical force in the sounding or pronouncing of the word, as the Jews do dote about the word Jehovah. To be short, Peter meant to declare that he was nothing but a minister, and that Christ was the author of the miracle. For this ought to have been, and was his care, that Christ might be made known unto the world, and that his name might be sanctified. But why doth he give Christ this epithet, or title, *of Nazareth?* I leave to other men their own judgment; but I think thus: Forasmuch as Christ was thus called in contempt, Peter meant of set purpose to express that that Jesus of Nazareth whom they had crucified, and whose name was despised and without glory amongst the Jews, and was to the most of them detestable, was nevertheless the Messias promised of God, and that all power was given unto him of the Father; as Paul saith, that he preacheth Christ and him crucified, (1 Cor. ii. 2.)

Arise and walk. This might seem to be a very ridiculous thing. For the cripple might have readily objected, Why hast thou not first given me legs and feet? For this is a plain mock, when as thou biddest a man without feet to go. But he believed Peter's words; and he, which was at the first so slow, doth now with a ready and joyful mind embrace God's benefit. Whereby appeareth both the force of the word, and also the fruit of faith. The force of the word

is double, both in that the cripple is so touched that he doth forthwith obey without delay; and in that it giveth strength to his dead members, and doth, after a sort, renew the man. And faith also hath her reward, in that the cripple obeyeth him which commandeth him to rise not in vain. Therefore we see how God worketh by his Word, to wit, when he giveth success to the preaching thereof, that it may pierce into the minds of men; secondly, when he giveth those things with his hand which are promised there. Moreover, he suffereth not faith to be void, but she doth indeed truly enjoy all those good things which she looketh for, and which are offered unto her in the same Word. And we must remember that which I have already said, that we have in this history a type[1] or figure of our spiritual restoring; namely, that as the Word, laid hold on by faith, did restore the cripple to his limbs, so the Lord pierceth into our souls by the Word, that he may restore the same. And, first of all, he speaketh by man's mouth, and pricketh us forward by the obedience of faith; that done, he moveth our hearts inwardly by his Spirit, that the Word may take lively root in us; finally, he reacheth out his hand, and by all means he finisheth his work in us. We gather out of Matthew that miracles must be thus handled.

9. *And all the people saw.* He beginneth now to declare the fruit of the miracle, to wit, that the cripple began to show his thankfulness by praising God, and that all the people were brought into great wondering. And here is a double fruit. For he which was healed doth acknowledge and set forth the benefit of God; on the other side, the people is moved, and the fame is spread abroad, many come to see it. And whereas Luke saith that they were filled with wondering, it doth only declare a preparation, which a more full proceeding[2] (and going forward) did at length follow. For it was necessary that they should go forward, because this their wondering had served to no end of itself,

[1] "Universalem typum," universal type. [2] "Profectus," progress, or profiting.

but did rather make them astonied and amazed, than bring them (from their own proceedings) unto God.

Therefore it was, as it were, the foundation of the building which was to come, in that the people was touched with amazedness. For if we pass over the works of God contemptibly or carelessly, we shall never be able to profit by them. Furthermore, this place doth teach us what miracles do work of themselves in men; to wit, that they breed a confused amazedness. For although the Lord doth call us straightway unto himself, by showing plainly his goodness and power there, yet such is the weakness of our nature, that we stumble or faint in the midway, until such time as we be holpen by doctrine.

Let us, therefore, learn reverently to consider the works of God, that the wondering at them may make an entrance for doctrine. For when doctrine is cold and unprofitable with us, God doth justly punish our unthankfulness by this means, because we have despised the glory of his works. Again, because we are not so quick of sight, that we can see so much in the works of God alone, as is sufficient, let us learn to join therewithal the help of doctrine.[1] To be brief, the one ought not to be separated from the other. Which thing experience doth sufficiently teach us. For hereby it came to pass that the world did so wickedly abuse miracles.

The Papists do object unto us miracles again and again. Let us suppose that they be true, whereof they make such boast, yet do they greatly err in this, that they wrest them to a wrong end; to wit, that they may darken the name of God, and infect the pure truth of the gospel with their inventions. For whence come so many superstitious worshippings of saints, save only from the abuse of miracles? For when any miracle is wrought, men must needs be moved. And because they are deaf when they should hear the Word, and do not mark what God doth mean, Satan doth craftily take an occasion of superstition by our amazed-

[1] "Si volumus ad scopum pervenire," if we would attain to the mark, omitted.

ness.[1] As, for example, I will acknowledge the power of God in a miracle. If it were wrought by Peter, Satan will by and by put this in my head, and will say thus:[2] Dost thou not see that this is a man of God?[3] therefore thou dost owe unto him divine honour. The same thing had befallen the Jews when they were amazed, unless Peter's sermon had called them back into the right way. But in Popery, where none did call them back or reprove them,[4] the preposterous wondering of men did easily get the upper hand. Wherefore, we must so much the more[5] seek for medicine out of the Word, that doctrine may direct us unto the right end, being lifted up[6] with the miracles.

11. *In the porch.* It is like that there was a porch builded in that place where Solomon's porch was sometimes, and that it took the name therefrom. For the old temple was pulled down, but Zerubbabel and Ezra, in the re-edifying and new building of the same temple, had imitated the same, so nigh as they could possibly devise. Afterward Herod renewed the same, and made it far more gorgeous, but that vain cost which he had bestowed had not yet blotted out the remembrance of Solomon in the hearts of the people. And Luke nameth the same as a most famous place, whereunto the people ran together (by heaps, to celebrate their feasts unto God at the times appointed.)

12. *And when Peter saw that, he made answer unto the people, Men of Israel, why marvel ye at this, or why look ye so stedfastly on us, as if by our own power or godliness we have made this man walk?*

13. *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye have delivered, and whom ye have denied before the face of Pilate, when he had judged him to be loosed.*

[1] "Ex nostro stupore," from our stupor, or stupidity. [2] "Suggeret mihi," will suggest to me. [3] "Divinum hominem," a divine man. [4] "Ubi nullus coarguebat superstitionem," where none condemned the superstition. [5] "Magis sollicite," the more anxiously. [6] "Erectos," when we are lifted up, or aroused by.

14. *But ye have denied the holy, the just, and have desired to have a murderer given you.*
15. *But ye have murdered the Prince of life : whom God hath raised up from the dead ; whereof we are witnesses : and in the faith of his name, his name hath strengthened this man, whom ye have seen and known.*
16. *And the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in presence of you all.*

12. *Men of Israel.* He beginneth his sermon with a reproving of the people. And yet doth he not simply reprove them because they wonder; for that was altogether profitable and worthy praise; but because they do wickedly ascribe unto men that praise which is due to the work of God. As if he should say, Ye do amiss, in that you stay in us, and stand gazing upon us, whereas you ought rather to look upon God and Christ. Therefore, this is to be amazed evilly, when as our minds do stay in men. And we must note that he condemneth the respect of men; as if, saith he, we by our own power and virtue had done this. Therefore there is an error and corruption in this, if we attribute that unto the godliness and power of men which is proper to God and Christ. And, as concerning power, no man will deny that it cometh of God; yet when they have confessed this in one word, they do not cease to take from God his right, to the end they may adorn the creatures with that which they take from him; as we see the Papists place the power of God in the saints; yea, they include his power in a stone or stock of wood, so soon as the image is consecrated to Barbara or Chrysogonus. But, notwithstanding, let us suppose that they do not offend in that former member; yet do they foolishly think that they have done their duty toward God, when as they leave him the power, and assign the miracles unto the godliness of saints. For why do they run unto them, when they will obtain either rain or fair weather, or be delivered from diseases, unless they do imagine that they have by their godliness deserved that God should grant them this right and privilege? This is,

therefore, but a childish starting-hole,[1] when they confess that God is the author of the power; but they thank the godliness of saints for those benefits which they have received. Howsoever they colour the matter, we must always know this, that Peter doth generally condemn those which do so look unto men in miracles, that they think that their holiness is the cause thereof. This is the first part of the sermon, wherein he reproveth superstition. And we must note his manner and order of teaching. For because men are inclined to nothing more than to fall from God unto the creatures, it is very expedient to prevent this vice in time. And if the people were forbidden to look unto the apostles, much more doth the Spirit draw us away from calling upon every petty saint.

13, 14. *The God of Abraham.* He addeth a remedy now in calling them back unto Christ. And the sum is this, That this is God's purpose in those miracles which he worketh by the apostles to set forth the glory of his Christ; whereupon it followeth that all those do deal disorderly who set up Peter, or any other, whatsoever he be, forasmuch as all men must decrease, and Christ alone must be excellent, (John iii. 30.) Here appeareth a manifest difference between Christ and the apostles. First of all, he is the author, they are only the ministers; secondly, this is the lawful end, that he alone may have the glory; and as for them there is no respect to be had of them as concerning glory; for certainly they which do glorify any in miracles besides Christ, they set themselves flatly against the counsel of God.

He maketh mention of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the end he may declare unto the people that he meaneth nothing less than to lead them away from the old and ancient worship of the true God, which they had received of the fathers. Furthermore, God hath given himself this title, that he might (dissever and) distinguish himself by some mark from idols; for we do not comprehend God in his essence, which cannot be seen, and which is in-

[1] "Effugium," evasion or subterfuge.

finite; therefore, he useth such means as agree best with us, to bring us to the knowledge of him. The Turks do boast that they do worship God, which is the creator of heaven and earth; but before they come at heaven they vanish away. Therefore, to the end God might keep his people from vain and erroneous inventions, he kept them in his covenant; therefore, when he calleth himself the God of Abraham, he did briefly teach that which Moses declareth more at large, (Deut. xxx. 12,) "Say not, Who shall ascend into heaven? Who shall go down into the depth? Or who shall sail over the seas? The word is nigh," &c. Furthermore, as amongst the Jews the name of the holy fathers was in high estimation, so Peter doth closely[1] tell them, that they were no better than other men, without the only begotten Son of God. And at this day God will be known by a more evident mark yet, when as he calleth himself the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us now return unto Peter; he saith that he bringeth in no new religion, that he may draw away the people from the law and the prophets; for if he should attempt this, God had forbidden them to hear him, (Deut. xiii. 3.) Like as Paul teacheth, that we must retain one foundation in the spiritual building, (1 Cor. iii. 11,) because, so soon as we depart even but a little from Christ, there can nothing ensue but ruin. And hereby also we may easily discern in what sense he calleth God the God of the fathers; for neither doth he take this for a general maxim, that what manner of worship soever the fathers had, we must continue the same, as the Papists do foolishly vaunt that they do follow the manner of worshipping which was used amongst the fathers; for Peter doth expressly reckon up Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from whom true religion did proceed, and by whom it was divinely delivered; whereby he doth signify unto us, that we must not follow all fathers, whereof many did grow out of kind, and became altogether unlike to the first fathers; that this honour is due to the children of God alone, and that others are to be refused; which thing the prophets do also beat in[2]

[1] "Tacite admonet," tacitly reminds them. [2] "Inculcant," inculcate.

everywhere: "Walk not in the ways of your fathers," &c., (Ezekiel xx. 18.)

Whom ye have delivered. He mingleth with doctrine a most sharp chiding, according as the matter did require; for it was impossible to bring them truly unto God, unless they were first brought to the knowledge of their sins; neither doth he only lightly touch them, but he doth very gravely show them the horribleness of that offence which they had committed. To this end tendeth that comparison, that they delivered him to be put to death, whom Pilate would have loosed; and again, that, pardoning a murderer, they put the Prince of life to death; that they did reject the just and holy. Men must be so stricken, that being brought to know their guiltiness, they may earnestly fly unto the remedy of pardon. Such vehemence and earnestness did Peter also use in his first sermon; he saith afterward that *God raised him up*, whereby they ought to know that, in putting Christ to death, they did strive against God; although Peter had respect unto an higher thing, to wit, that their cruelty did no whit impair the glory of Christ, because God had nevertheless restored him to life. When as he saith, that he and his fellows in office were witnesses of the resurrection, his meaning is, that they saw it with their eyes, (Luke xxiv. 48.) Therefore, this is referred not only unto the apostolical function, but because they saw Christ with their eyes after that he was risen from the dead; although I do also grant that this second thing is comprehended under these words, because it is likely that Peter doth make mention of that function which was committed unto him, to the end he may purchase the greater authority.

16. *And in the faith of his name.* When as he saith *in the faith of his name, and his name;* and again, the *faith which is by him;* this repetition is a token of a fervent affection, for because he was wholly given to set forth the glory of Christ, he beateth in [inculcateth] the same thing oftentimes. Moreover, we see that when Paul is occupied about the showing and setting forth of the grace of Christ,

he thinketh that he hath never spoken enough touching the same; and surely such is the wicked nature of men, that Christ cannot be so highly extolled, and so preached, that his honour can remain sound unto him. Let us, therefore, remember that Peter did use such variety and plenty of words, to the end he might stay us in Christ. As touching the phrase, when as he saith, *his name, in the faith of his name hath strengthened*, he showeth both the cause and the manner; the power of Christ had healed the cripple but by faith. When as he saith, *the faith which is by him*, by this word he signifieth unto us that our faith cannot arise up unto God unless it be grounded in Christ, and so, consequently, that this our faith doth look unto Christ and stay itself upon him, and so he showeth that there can be no right faith in God when we pass over this mean.

Furthermore, as he said before, that he and the other apostles were witnesses of Christ's life, so he doth now declare that this life was manifestly proved unto the Jews by a sign or effect, because they see the cripple healed, in whom they had an excellent and evident token of the Divine power of Christ. And when as in this last member he maketh faith the cause of this soundness, he layeth unthankfulness to their charge by the way, unless they give faith her due praise; and although faith may be referred as well unto the man that was healed as unto the apostles, yet we need not to stand much about this manner, because the power of the gospel is set forth by *synecdoche*.

17. *And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers.*
18. *And God hath fulfilled all things which he had spoken by the mouth of his prophets, that Christ should suffer.*
19. *Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be forgiven,*
20. *When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send him that was preached before, Jesus Christ:*
21. *Whom heaven must contain until the time that all things be restored, which he hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy*

prophets, since the beginning of the world, [or set before your eyes and represented.]

17. Because it was to be doubted, lest, being cast down with despair, they should refuse his doctrine, he doth a little lift them up. We must so temper our sermons that they may profit the hearers, for unless there be some hope of pardon left, the terror and fear of punishment doth harden men's hearts with stubbornness; for that of David is true, That we fear the Lord when we perceive that he is unto us favourable, and easy to be pacified, (Psalm cxxx. 4.) Thus doth Peter lessen the sin of his nation, because of their ignorance; for it had been impossible for them to have suffered and endured this conscience, if they had denied the Son of God, and delivered him to be slain, wittingly and willingly; and yet will he not flatter them, when as he saith that they did it through ignorance; but he doth only somewhat mitigate his speech, lest they should be overwhelmed and swallowed up of despair. Again, we must not so take the words as if the people did sin simply of ignorance, for under this there did lie hid hypocrisy; but as wickedness or ignorance doth abound, the action is named of the one or the other. This is, therefore, Peter's meaning, that they did it rather through error and a blind zeal, than through any determined wickedness; but a question may be moved here, if any man have offended wittingly and willingly, whether he shall surely fall into despair or not? I answer, that he doth not make mention in this place of all manner of sin; but only of the denying of Christ, and of the extinguishing of the grace of God, so much as in them did lie. If any man be desirous to know more concerning this, he may read the first chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy, (1 Tim. i. 13.)

As did also your rulers. First, this seemeth to be an improper comparison, for the scribes and the priests were carried headlong with a wonderful madness, and they were full of wicked unfaithfulness;[1] but the perverse study and zeal of the law did prick forward the people. Again, the

[1] "Perfidia," perfidy.

people were incensed against Christ, inasmuch as their rulers did provoke them thereunto. I answer, that they were not all of one mind, for without doubt many of them were like unto Paul, unto whom that doth truly appertain, which he writeth elsewhere of the princes and rulers of this world, if they had known the wisdom of God they would never have crucified the Lord of glory; therefore, he speaketh not generally of all the rulers; but if any of them be curable, them doth he invite to repentance.

18. *And God.* Hereby it appeareth more plainly to what end he made mention of ignorance; for when he telleth them that God hath accomplished those things which he had foretold, he doth so touch their offence in the death of Christ, that it turneth to their salvation. Ignorance, saith he, hath made you guilty, yet God hath brought that to pass which he had determined, that Christ should redeem you by his death. This is a most notable consideration, when as we ponder and consider with ourselves, that through the wonderful counsel of God our evils are turned to another end to us, yet this doth no whit excuse us, for so much as in us lieth we cast away[1] ourselves by sinning; but that conversion whereof I have spoken is a notable work of God's mercy, whereof we must speak, and which we must extol with humility. The Jews did what they could to extinguish all hope of life in the person of Christ; and yet, nevertheless, that death gave life as well to them as to the whole world. We must also remember that which we saw elsewhere, lest there should any false and absurd opinion creep in, that Christ was laid open to the lust of the wicked, that God is made the chief author by whose will his only Son did suffer.

19. *Repent.* We must note, that when he exhorteth unto repentance, he doth also declare that there is remission of sins prepared for them before the face of God. For, as I said of late, no man can be stirred up to repentance,

[1] "Perdimus," destroy.

unless he have salvation set before him; but he which doth despair of pardon, being, as it were, given over unto destruction already, doth not fear to run headlong against God obstinately. Hereby it cometh to pass that the Papists cannot deliver the doctrine of repentance. They babble, indeed, very much concerning the same; but because they overthrow the hope of grace, it cannot be that they should persuade their disciples unto the study of repentance. Moreover, I confess that they babble a little touching forgiveness of sins; but because they leave men's souls in doubt and in fearfulness, and, furthermore, do cast them as it were into a labyrinth, (or place out of which they know not how to come,) this part of the doctrine being corrupt, they confound the other also.

20. *That when.* If we follow Erasmus and the old interpreter, this sentence shall be unperfect,[1] which may be made perfect, thus: *When the time of refreshing shall come, you may also enjoy this refreshing;* when Christ shall come to judge the world, you may find him a Redeemer and not a Judge. But because Beza doth fitly translate it, *After that they shall come,* it is better to retain that which is not so racked;[2] so you resolve it thus: That sins are so forgiven against the day of the last judgment; because, unless we be cited to appear before God's judgment-seat, we are not greatly careful to pacify God. First of all, we must note, that he setteth before them the day of judgment, to the end the former exhortation may take the greater effect. For there is nothing which doth more prick us, than when we are taught that we must once give an account. For so long as our senses are holden and kept in this world, they are drowned, as it were, in a certain drowsiness,[3] that I may so call it. Wherefore the message of the last judgment must sound as a trumpet to cite us to appear before the judgment-seat of God. For

[1] "Ecliptica," elliptic. [2] "Coactum," forced. [3] "Quodam, ut ita loquar veterno obruti sunt," are oppressed, so to speak, with a kind of lethargy.

then at last being truly awaked, we begin to think of a new life. In like sort, when Paul preached at Athens, God saith, that he doth now will all men to repent; because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world, (Acts xvii. 30, 31.) The sum is this, that Christ, who is now unto us a Master, when as he teacheth us by the gospel, is appointed of the Father to be a Judge, and shall come in his due time; and that, therefore, we must obey his doctrine betimes, that we may gather the fruit of our faith then.

But some man may object, that Peter speaketh otherwise of the last day. For this doth not serve to make them afraid, when he saith, *the time of refreshing.* I answer, that there is a double prick, wherewith the faithful are pricked forward when as they are told of the last judgment. For the profit of faith doth not appear in this world, yea rather it seemeth to go well with the despisers of God; but the life of the godly is full of miseries. Therefore our hearts should oftentimes faint and quail, unless we should remember that the day of rest shall come, which shall quench all the heat of our trouble, and make an end of our miseries. The other prick whereof I spake is this, when as the fearful judgment of God causeth us to shake off delicacy and drowsiness. So Peter mixeth in this place threatenings with promises, partly to the end he may allure the Jews unto Christ, and partly that he may prick them forward with fear. Furthermore, this is a thing much used in the Scripture, as it speaketh either unto the reprobate, or unto the elect, sometimes to make the day of the Lord doleful and fearful, sometimes to make the same pleasant and to be wished for. Peter therefore doth very well, who, whilst that he putteth the Jews in good hope of pardon, doth make the day of Christ pleasant to them, to the end they may desire the same.

And shall send him. He saith expressly that Christ shall be Judge, to the end they may know that the contempt of the gospel shall not be unpunished. For how should not Christ punish the same? In the meanwhile, this doth greatly

comfort the faithful, when as they know that it shall be in his hand to give salvation, who doth now promise and offer the same. He addeth, moreover, that he shall come who is now preached unto them. Whereby he taketh away all excuse of ignorance. As if he should say, Christ is preached unto you now before he come to judge the world; to the end that those who will embrace him may receive the fruit of their faith at that day; and to the end that others, who shall refuse him, may be punished for their unbelief. Although the Grecians do read this two ways; for some books[1] have προκεκηρυγμενον, that is, *preached before;* and other some προκεχειρισμενον, that is, *showed, or set before their eyes.* But both have one sense, to wit, that Christ is not offered unto them in vain now by the doctrine of the gospel; because he shall be sent the second time by his Father to be a Judge, armed and prepared to render vengeance, unless they embrace him now for their Redeemer.

21. *Whom the heaven must contain.* Because men's senses are always bent and inclined towards the gross and earthly beholding of God and Christ, the Jews might think with themselves that Christ was preached, indeed, to be raised up from the dead, yet could they not tell where he was; for no man did show them where he was. Therefore Peter preventeth them, when he saith that he is in heaven. Whereupon it followeth that they must lift up their minds on high, to the end they may seek Christ with the eyes of faith, although he be far from them,[2] although he dwell without the world in the heavenly glory. But this is a doubtful[3] speech; because we may as well understand it that Christ is contained or comprehended in the heavens, as that he doth comprehend the heavens. Let us not therefore urge the word, being of a doubtful signification; but let us content ourselves with that which is certain, that we must seek for Christ nowhere else save only in heaven,

[1] "Codices," manuscripts. [2] "Quamvis immensa locorum distantia sit remotus," although, in respect of place, he is at an immense distance from them. [3] "Ambigua loquutio," an ambiguous expression.

whilst that we hope for the last restoring of all things; because he shall be far from us, until our minds ascend high above the world.

Until the time of restoring. As touching the force and cause, Christ hath already restored all things by his death; but the effect doth not yet fully appear; because that restoring is yet in the course, and so, consequently, our redemption, forasmuch as we do yet groan under the burden of servitude. For as the kingdom of Christ is only begun, and the perfection thereof is deferred until the last day, so those things which are annexed thereunto do now appear only in part. Therefore, if at this day we see many things confused in the world, let this hope set us upon foot and refresh us, that Christ shall once come that he may restore all things. In the mean season, if we see the relics of sin hang on us, if we be environed on every side with divers miseries, if the world be full of wasting and scattering abroad, let us bewail these miseries, yet so that we uphold with the hope of restoring. And this is the reason why Christ doth not appear by and by,[1] because the warfare of the Church is not yet full,[2] whose time, seeing it is appointed by God, it is not for us to prevent the same.[3]

Which he spake. I do not expound this of the times alone, but I refer it unto the whole period; so that the sense is this: That whatsoever he had spoken before of the kingdom of Christ is witnessed by all the prophets. Certes, the gospel doth win no small credit hereby, that so soon as God began to show himself to the world, he did always set Christ before them; after that he began to speak unto the fathers, he did always lay this foundation of doctrine. By the same argument Paul commendeth the gospel, both in the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, (i. 1,) and also in the end, (xvi. 25,) to wit, that it is no new thing, but promised even from the beginning.[4] This is true antiquity, which is able to purchase credit to doctrine: when as God himself is the

[1] "Statim," immediately.
[2] "Completa," complete.
[3] "Antivertere," anticipate.
[4] "Ab ultima ætate," from the remotest age.

author, the holy prophets the witnesses, and the continual course of times confirmeth the testimony. This confirmation was especially necessary for the Jews, who being brought up in the doctrine of the law, ought to admit nothing but that which agreeth therewith. Therefore Peter doth command them only to mind those things which the prophets have testified of Christ.

22. *Moses truly said unto the fathers, The Lord your God shall raise up a Prophet unto you of your brethren,* [*like unto me ;*] *him shall ye hear, according to all things which he shall speak unto you.*
23. *And it shall come to pass, that every soul which shall not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed of the people.*
24. *And all the prophets from Samuel, and thenceforth, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold these days.*

22. By this argument he proveth that he goeth not about to cause them to revolt from Moses, because it is a part of the law to take heed to and obey this chief teacher. Here might a doubt arise, why Peter thought it more convenient to cite this testimony of Moses than others, seeing there were many others in readiness far more plain; but he did this for this cause, because he intreateth in this place of the authority of doctrine; and this was the best way to bring the Jews to be Christ's disciples. For he should have preached in vain of all other things, unless they had been persuaded that his doctrine was reverently to be received. This is therefore the thing which Peter aimeth at, to bring them to hear Christ willingly, as the master whom God hath appointed to teach them.

But here ariseth a question, which hath in it great difficulty; to wit, in that Peter applieth that unto the person of Christ which Moses spake generally of the prophets. For although he make mention of a prophet in the singular number, yet the text [context] doth plainly declare, that he speaketh not of one alone; but that this word is put indefinitely. For after that Moses had forbidden the people to

give themselves unto the superstitions of the Gentiles, by turning aside unto enchanters and soothsayers, he showeth them therewithal a remedy, whereby they may avoid all vanity; to wit, if they depend wholly upon the Word of God alone. By this means he promiseth that God will be careful at all times to send them prophets, that they may teach them aright. As if he should say, God will never suffer you to be destitute of prophets, of whom you may learn whatsoever shall be profitable for you to know. And Moses saith expressly, *of thy brethren*, to the end the Jews may know that the oracles of God are to be sought and set no where else, seeing that God had appointed unto them teachers of the kindred of Abraham. He addeth further, *like unto me*, that they may know that they were not to hear God only at one time, or by the mouth of one man; but as God proceedeth to teach us by divers ministers throughout the continual course of time, so must we hold on in the obedience of the word. Now, the Jews were wont to reverence Moses; therefore, he will have them to give like honour to the prophets. I know that many would fain restrain it unto Christ. They catch at this word, whereas Moses doth testify that the prophet shall be like unto him, (Deut. xviii. 15,) whereas, notwithstanding, it is written, that there arose none like unto Moses. I confess that there is in both places the same note of likeness, yet in a diverse sense. For, in the second place, the likeness or equality is expressed, as it doth plainly appear. They catch also at another thing, that the prophet shall far excel Moses, of whom he beareth witness as a crier or herald. But this is never a whit stronger, because Moses goeth about to bring to pass that the word of God may be believed by whomsoever it be brought.

Therefore, there is no cause why we should set ourselves to be laughed to scorn by the Jews, by wresting the words of Moses violently, as if he spake of Christ alone in this place. Yet we must see whether Peter doth cite the testimony fitly, whose authority ought to serve for a sound reason. I say, that in Peter's speech there is nothing which is

not most convenient. For he saw that which all men ought to grant, that this testimony doth so appertain unto the other prophets, that yet notwithstanding it doth chiefly commend Christ, not only because that he is the prince and chief of all the prophets, but because all other former prophecies were directed toward him, and because God did at length speak absolutely by his mouth. For God spake in divers manners, and at sundry times in times past, unto our fathers by the prophets, he addeth the conclusion at length, in the last days in his only begotten Son, (Heb. i. 1, 2.) Therefore, it came to pass, that they wanted prophets for a certain years[1] before his coming; which thing is plainly gathered out of the words of Malachi, who, after he hath commanded the people to be mindful of the law, he passeth over by and by unto John Baptist and unto Christ, as if he should say, that the prophecies are now ended until the last revelation come, (Mal. iv. 4–6;) according to that, "The law and the prophets prophesied until John; after that the kingdom of God is preached," (Matth. xi. 13.) And that was so common amongst the people, that the woman of Samaria could say, according to the common fame and opinion, "We know that the Messias shall come, who will teach us all things," (John iv. 25.) Therefore, we know that after the return of the people all the prophets ceased, to the end they might be made more attentive to hear Christ, by that silence or intermission of revelations. Therefore, Peter did not wrest this place, or abuse the same through ignorance, but he took that doctrine which all men had received for a principle; that God had promised to teach his people at the first by his prophets as by means,[2] but at length principally by Christ, at whose hands they were to hope for the perfect manifestation and laying open of all things. And to this purpose serveth that excellent testimony or commendation, wherewith his Father setteth him forth, "Hear him," (Matth. xvii. 5.)

[1] "Aliquot...sæcula," for some ages.

[2] "Velut intermedios," as intermediate.

23. *Every soul.* Here, by a most grievous punishment against the rebellious, the authority of all the prophets, but most of all of Christ, is established; and that for good causes. For seeing there is nothing that God doth account more precious than his word, it cannot be that he should suffer the same to be freely contemned. Therefore, if any man despised the law of Moses, he was adjudged to die the death. And hereunto Moses had respect when he said, "He shall be put away from among the people." For God had adopted the stock and kindred of Abraham unto himself, upon this condition, that this might be sufficient for them unto the chiefest felicity to be reckoned in that number, as it is said in the Psalm, "Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord." And in another place, "Blessed is the nation whom the Lord hath chosen to be his inheritance." Wherefore it is not to be doubted, but that he pronounceth that he shall be blotted out of the book of life whosoever shall refuse to hear Christ. For he is not worthy to be accounted one of the Church, whosoever he be that refuseth to have him to be his Master, by whom alone God doth teach us, and by whom he will have us to hear himself; and he cutteth himself away from the body, whosoever he be that refuseth to be under the Head.

24. *And all.* When as he saith that all the prophets do with one consent send their scholars unto Christ, that appeareth more plainly hereby, which I said, that the commendation of the gospel is contained under that testimony of Moses, and so, consequently, that the conclusion of prophecies is principally noted. Again, this maketh much for the certainty of the gospel, that all the prophets, for a long time, [series of ages,] do yet, notwithstanding, so temper their form of teaching with one consent, that they do testify altogether that men ought to hope for a certain, better, and more perfect thing. Therefore, whosoever will believe Moses and the prophets, he must needs submit himself unto the doctrine of Christ, without which all that is lame and imperfect which they taught, (John v. 47.)

25. *You are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed.*
26. *God raised up unto you first his Son Jesus, and he sent him, blessing you, whilst that he doth turn away every one from his sins.*

25. *You are the children.* He signifieth that the grace of the covenant was appointed principally for them, which covenant God made with their fathers. And so as he pricked them forward to obey the gospel, by terrifying them with the terror of punishment, so he allureth them now again to receive the grace which is offered them in Christ; so that we see how that God omitteth nothing whereby he may bring us unto himself. And it is the duty of a wise minister so to prick forward the sluggish and slow bellies, that he do lead those gently which are apt to be taught; we must also note diligently this course of teaching, where Peter showeth that the gospel is assigned and appointed unto the Jews. For it is not sufficient to have the mercy of God preached unto us generally, unless we also know that the same is offered unto us by the certain ordinance of God. For this cause is it that Paul standeth so much upon the avouching of the calling of the Gentiles, (Rom. xv. 18; Eph. iii. 3, 4;) because, if any man should think that the gospel came unto him by chance, when as it was scattered here and there, faith should quail;[1] yea, there should be a doubtful opinion instead of faith. Therefore, to the end we may stedfastly believe the promise of salvation, this application (that I may so term it) is necessary, that God doth not cast forth uncertain voices, that they may hang in the air, but that he doth direct the same unto us by his certain and determinate counsel. Peter telleth the Jews, that Christ is promised unto them after this sort, to the end they may more willingly embrace him. And how proveth he this? because they are the children of the prophets and of the covenant.

[1] "Vacillaret," vacillate or waver.

He calleth them the children of the prophets, which were of the same nation, and therefore were heirs of the covenant, which did belong unto the whole body of the people. For he argueth thus: God made his covenant with our fathers; therefore we, which are their posterity, are comprehended in the covenant.

Whereby the doubting [doting] subtilty of the Anabaptists is refuted, who do expound the children of Abraham only allegorically; as if God had had no respect to his stock, when he said, "I will be the God of thy seed," (Gen. xvii. 7.) Certainly Peter doth not speak in this place of the shadows of the law; but he affirmeth that this is of force under the kingdom of Christ, that God doth adopt the children together with the fathers; and so, consequently, the grace of salvation may be extended unto those which are as yet unborn, (Rom. ix. 7.) I grant, indeed, that many which are the children of the faithful, according to the flesh, are counted bastards, and not legitimate, because they thrust themselves out of the holy progeny through their unbelief. But this doth no whit hinder the Lord from calling and admitting the seed of the godly into fellowship of grace. And so, although the common election be not effectual in all, yet may it set open a gate for the special elect. As Paul intreateth in the 11th to the Romans, (ver. 23,) whence we must set [seek] an answer for this question.

And in thy seed. He proveth that the covenant was made with the fathers, because God said unto Abraham, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed," (Gen. xxii. 18.) But if we admit Paul's interpretation, this testimony shall make nothing for the present cause. Paul teacheth that Christ is this seed, (Gal. iii. 16.) If the blessing be promised to all mankind by Christ, what is this to the especial or particular privilege of one nation? Secondly, Peter himself seemeth shortly after to subscribe to this exposition of Paul, when as he saith that Christ was sent, that in him the Jews may be blessed. For this could not be, unless Christ were that blessed seed. I answer, When Paul referreth it unto Christ, he standeth not upon the word *seed*, but he hath respect to

an higher thing; to wit, that it cannot be one seed, unless it be united and knit together in Christ, as in the Head. For Ismael and Isaac, although both of them be the sons of Abraham, yet do they not make one seed, because they be divided into two people. Therefore, though many be estranged from the family of Abraham, which came of him according to the flesh, yet Moses noteth one certain body, when he promiseth the blessing unto the seed of Abraham. And whence cometh the unity, save only from the Head, which is Christ? In this sense doth Paul understand this word *seed* of Christ, although it be a noun collective; because, if you depart from him, the posterity of Abraham shall be as torn members, neither shall there be any thing else in them, save only mere wasteness and scattering abroad. Peter agreeth with that doctrine, because he doth so extend the blessing unto all the people, that he doth, nevertheless, seek the fountain in Christ.

Secondly, forasmuch as the Jews do what they can to wring [wrest] from us this testimony, the godly readers must arm themselves against their cavils; and so much the rather, because Christian writers have been too slack in this point, as I have said in the Epistle to the Galatians. First, as touching the word *seed*, there is no cause why they should prattle that Paul doth not rightly restrain it unto Christ; for he doth not this simply, but in that respect whereof I have spoken. In which point, I confess, both our Latin and Greek interpreters have erred. Now, we must see what this manner of speech doth import. The Gentiles shall be blessed in the seed of Abraham. Our men think that there is some cause noted; to wit, that through that seed the Gentiles shall be blessed. The Jews toss this to and fro, because this phrase signifieth every where in the Scriptures, an example or similitude; as, on the other side,[1] to be cursed in Sodom, in Israel, or in another people, is to take them for a notable example of a curse. I answer, that it is a doubtful speech, and taken diversely, according to the circum-

[1] "Converso," conversely.

stance of the places, which the Jews do craftily dissemble. For they gather many places, out of which they prove that there is a comparison made; as if it should be said, The Gentiles shall desire to be blessed, like to the seed of Abraham. But when as the Scripture saith elsewhere, "They shall bless themselves in the living God," as Jer. iv. 2; Isa. lxv. 16; and again, "Do bless in the name of the Lord," (Deut. x. 8,) and in other such like places; who doth not see that there is a cause expressed? Therefore, I say that this form of speech ought to be understood according to the circumstances of the places.

And now, forasmuch as I have declared that the seed of Abraham can be found nowhere else save only in Christ, it remaineth that we consider of what sort the office of Christ is. So shall it appear, undoubtedly, that he is not made a bare example or pattern, but that the blessing is truly promised to him; because without him we be all accursed. Yet there remaineth one doubt; for certain both these are spoken in one sense, They shall be blessed in thee, and in thy seed; but Abraham was nothing else but a type or mirror of the blessing. I answer, that in the person of Abraham, that body is also noted out, which dependeth upon one head, and is knit together in the same.

All the families. The Jews do grossly expound this, That all nations shall desire to be blessed, as the seed of Abraham. But we say otherwise, That they shall be ingrafted into the society. For the name of Abraham tendeth to this end, because it should come to pass that God should gather all people[1] unto him. Also, when the prophets will declare the force hereof, they foretel everywhere that the inheritance of salvation shall be common to the Gentiles. And hereby it appeareth that the covenant of God, which was then proper to the Jews alone, is not only common to all men, but is made with us expressly; otherwise, we could not conceive that hope of salvation which is firm enough out of the gospel. Therefore, let us not suffer this promise

[1] "Populos," nations.

to be wrung from us, which is, as it were, a solemn declaration, whereby the Lord maketh us his heirs together with the fathers. Whereunto Peter also had respect, when as he saith shortly after, that Christ was first sent unto the Jews; for he doth signify that the Gentiles also have their order, though it be secondary.

26. *He hath raised up his Son.* He gathereth out of the words of Moses that Christ is now revealed. But the words do seem to import no such thing; yet doth he reason fitly thus, because the blessing could no otherwise be, unless the beginning thereof did flow from the Messias. For we must always remember this, that all mankind is accursed, and, therefore, there is a singular remedy promised us, which is performed by Christ alone. Wherefore, he is the only fountain and beginning of the blessing. And if so be that Christ came to this end, that he may bless the Jews first, and, secondly, us, he hath undoubtedly done that which was his duty to do; and we shall feel the force and effect of this duty in ourselves, unless our unbelief do hinder us.

This was a part of the priest's office under the law, to bless the people; and, lest this should be only a vain ceremony, there was a promise added; as it is, (Numb. vi. 27.) And that which was shadowed in the old priesthood was truly performed in Christ, (Heb. vii. 1, 6.) Concerning which matter we have spoken more at large in the seventh chapter to the Hebrews. I like not Erasmus's translation; for he saith, *when he had raised him up*, as if he spake of a thing which was done long ago. But Peter meaneth rather, that Christ was raised up, when he was declared to be the author of the blessing; which thing, since it was done of late and suddenly, it ought to move their minds the more. For the Scripture useth to speak thus, as in the last place, of Moses, whereunto Peter alludeth. To raise up a prophet, is to furnish him with necessary gifts to fulfil his function, and, as it were, to prefer him to the degree of prophetical honour. And Christ was raised up then, when he fulfilled the function enjoined him by his Father, but the

same thing is done daily when he is offered by the gospel, that he may excel amongst us. We have said that in the adverb of order, first, is noted the right of the first-begotten, because it was expedient that Christ should begin with the Jews, that he might afterward pass over unto the Gentiles.

Whilst that he turneth. He doth again commend the doctrine of repentance, to the end we may learn to conclude under the blessing of Christ newness of life, as when Esaias promiseth that a "Redeemer should come to Zion," he addeth a restraint;[1] "Those which in Jacob shall be turned from their iniquities." For Christ doth not do away the sins of the faithful, to the end they may grant liberty to themselves to sin under this colour; but he maketh them therewith all new men. Although we must diligently distinguish these two benefits which are linked together, that this ground-work may continue, that we are reconciled to God by free pardon, I know that other men turn it otherwise; but this is the true meaning of Luke; for he speaketh thus word for word, "In turning every one from his wickedness."

CHAPTER IV.

1. *And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the governor of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,*
2. *Taking it grievously that they taught the people, and preached, in Jesus' name, the resurrection from the dead.*
3. *And they laid hands on them, and they put them in prison until the morrow. For it was now even-tide.*
4. *And many of those which heard the word believed; and the number of men there was about five thousand.*

In this narration we must consider three things chiefly.

[1] "Restrictionem," a reservation.

That so soon as the truth of the gospel doth once appear, Satan setteth himself against the same on the other side, so much as he is able, and attempteth all things that he may smoulder the same in the very first beginnings. Secondly, That God doth furnish his children with invincible force and strength,[1] that they may stand stedfast and unmoveable against all assaults of Satan, and not yield unto the violence of the wicked. And, last of all, we must note the event and end, that howsoever the adversaries seem to bear the chiefest swing, and they themselves do omit nothing which may serve to blot out the name of Christ; and, on the other side, howsoever the ministers of sound doctrine be as sheep in the mouths of wolves, yet doth God spread abroad the kingdom of his Son; he fostereth the light of the gospel which is lighted; and he is the protector of his children. Therefore, so often as the doctrine of the gospel ariseth, and divers motions do rise on the other side, and the course thereof is letted divers ways, there is no cause why godly minds should faint or quail, as at some unwonted thing; but they ought rather to remember, that these are ordinary endeavours of Satan, so that we must think upon this well before it come to pass, that it cannot otherwise be but that Satan will spue out all his might and main, so often as Christ doth come abroad with his doctrine. And therewithal let us consider that the constancy of the apostles is set forth unto us for an example, lest, being overcome, either with any perils, or threatenings, or terrors, we leap back from that profession of faith which the Lord requireth at our hands. And, moreover, let us comfort ourselves with this, that we need not to doubt but that the Lord will give prosperous success when we have done our duty faithfully.

1. *And as they spake.* Hereby it appeareth how watchful the wicked be, because they are always ready at an inch to stop the mouth of the servants of Christ. And, undoubt-

[1] "Fortitudine," fortitude.

edly, they came together, as it were, to quench some great fire; which thing Luke signifieth, when as he saith that the ruler or captain of the temple came also; and he addeth, moreover, that they took it grievously that the apostles did teach. Therefore, they came not upon them by chance, but of set purpose, that, according to their authority, they might restrain the apostles, and put them to silence. And yet they have some show of law and equity; for if any man did rashly intrude himself, it was the office of the high priest to repress him; and also in like sort, to keep the people in the obedience of the law and the prophets, and to prevent all new doctrines. Therefore, when they hear unknown men, and such as had no public authority, preaching unto the people in the temple, they seem, according as their office did require, and they were commanded by God, to address themselves to remedy this. And surely, at the first blush, it seemeth that there was nothing in this action worthy of reprehension, but the end doth at length declare that their counsel was wicked, and their affection ungodly.

Again, it was a hard matter for the apostles to escape infamy and reproach, because they, being private and despised persons, did take upon them public authority; to wit, because, when things are out of order, many things must be essayed to [against] the common custom, and especially, when we are to avouch and defend religion and the worship of God, and the ringleaders themselves do stop all ways, and do abuse that office against God, which was committed unto them by God. The faithful champions of Christ must swallow up and pass through this ignominy in [under] Popery. For a thousand summers will go over their heads before any reformation or amendment will wax ripe amongst them for the better. Therefore, Luke standeth upon this point, when as he saith that they were grieved because the resurrection was preached in the name of Christ. For hereupon it followeth that they did hate the doctrine before they knew the same. He expresseth the Sadducees by

name, as those which were more courageous[1] in this cause. For they were almost [usually] a part of the priests; but because the question is about the resurrection, they set themselves against the apostles more than the rest. Furthermore, this was most monstrous confusion amongst the Jews, in that this sect, which was profane, was of such authority. For what godliness could remain, when as the immortality of the soul was counted as a fable, and that freely? But men must needs run headlong after this sort, when they have once suffered pure doctrine to fall to the ground amongst them. Wherefore, we must so much the more diligently beware of every wicked turning aside, lest such a step do follow immediately.

Some men think that the ruler of the temple was chosen from among the priests, but I do rather think that he was some chief captain of the Roman army; for it was a place which was fortified both naturally and artificially. Again, Herod had built a tower there, which was called Antonia; so that it is to be thought that he had placed there a band of soldiers, and that the Roman captain had the government of the temple, lest it should be a place of refuge for the Jews, if they had stirred up any tumult, which we may likewise gather out of Josephus. And this agreeth very well, that the enemies of Christ did crave the help of the secular power, under colour of appeasing some tumult. In the mean season, they seek favour at the hands of the Romans, as if they were careful to maintain the right of their empire.

4. *And many of them which heard.* The apostles are put in prison, but the force of their preaching is spread far and wide, and the course thereof is at liberty. Of which thing Paul boasteth very much, that the Word of God is not bound with him, (2 Tim. ii. 9.) And here we see that Satan and the wicked have liberty granted them to rage

[1] "Animosiores," more zealous.

against the children of God; yet can they not (maugre their heads[1]) prevail, but that God doth further and promote the kingdom of his Son; Christ doth gather together his sheep; and that a few men unarmed, furnished with no garrisons, do show forth more power in their voice alone, than all the world, by raging against them. This is, indeed, no common work of God, that one sermon brought forth such plentiful fruit; but this is the more to be wondered at, that the faithful are not terrified with the present danger, and discouraged from taking up the cross of Christ together with the faith. For this was a hard beginning for novices. Christ did more evidently declare by this efficacy and force of doctrine that he was alive, than if he should have offered his body to be handled with hand, and to be seen with the eyes. And whereas it is said that the number of those which believed did grow to be about five thousand, I do not understand it of those which were newly added, but of the whole church.

5. *And it came to pass, that the next day their rulers, and elders, and scribes, were gathered together at Jerusalem.*
6. *And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and so many as were of the kindred of the priests,*
7. *And when they had set them before them, they asked them, In what power, or in what name, have ye done that?*
8. *Then Peter, being filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,*
9. *If we be judged this day for healing the man which was lame, by what means he is made whole:*
10. *Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye have crucified, whom God hath raised up from the dead, this man standeth before you whole.*
11. *This is the stone which was refused of you the builders; it is placed in the head of the corner.*
12. *Neither is there salvation in any other. Neither is there*

[1] "Omnia machinando," by all their machinations.

any other name given under heaven unto men, wherein we must be saved.

5. It is a thing worthy to be noted in this place, that the wicked do omit no subtilty that they may blot out the gospel and the name of Christ, and yet do they not obtain that which they hoped for; because God doth make their counsels frustrate. For they make an assembly, wherein they do all things so tyrannously, that yet, notwithstanding, lust beareth a show of right, and liberty is driven far away, and at length the truth may seem to be condemned by good right. But the Lord bringeth upon them a sudden fear, so that they dare not do that which they can, and which they do most of all desire. Whatsoever the apostles shall bring in defence of their cause, that shall remain buried and shut up with the walls, where there is none which doth bear them any favour. And therefore there is no place left for the truth. Yet we see how the Lord bringeth their counsel to nought, whilst that being kept back with fear of the people, they stay themselves and bridle their fury, to the end they may avoid envy. But I marvel much why Luke doth make Annas the highest priest in this place, seeing that it appeareth by Josephus, that this honour was not taken from Caiaphas until Vitellius had entered Jerusalem to bear rule, after that Pilate was commanded to depart unto Rome. All men grant that the Lord was crucified in the eighteenth year of Tiberius. And that empire [the reign of Tiberius] did continue four years longer. And it must needs be, that there were three years complete, after the death of Christ, before Pilate was put from the office of the pro-consul. For when Tiberius was dead he came to Rome; so that Caiaphas was high priest yet three years after the death of Christ. Wherefore it is to be thought, that that whereof Luke speaketh in this place did not happen immediately after the resurrection of Christ; although the doubt cannot thus be answered.[1] For Josephus reporteth, that Jona-

[1] "Quanquam nec sic quidem soluta erit tota difficultas," although not even in this way will the whole difficulty be solved.

thas was chosen into the place of Caiaphas; but because this Jonathas was the son of Annas, it is a thing not unlike to be true, that the son was called by the name of the father; as Caiaphas also had two names; for they did also call him Joseph.

7. *In what power.* They do yet seem to have some zeal of God. For they feign that they are careful that the honour due unto God may not be given to any other. *Name* is taken in this place for authority. In sum, they deal as if they were most earnest defenders and maintainers of God's glory. In the mean season, their importunateness is wonderful, in that they go about to drive the apostles to make denial, by asking many questions concerning a manifest matter, and to wring out by fear some other thing than they had confessed. But God doth bring their crafty wiliness to nought, and maketh them hear that which they would not.

8. *Peter, being filled with the Holy Ghost.* It is not without great cause that Luke addeth this, to the end we may know that Peter spake not with such a majesty of himself. And surely, seeing he had denied his Master, Christ, being afraid at the voice of a silly woman, (Matth. xxvi. 70,) he should have utterly fainted in such an assembly, when he did only behold their pomp, unless he had been upholden by the power of the Spirit. He had great need of wisdom and strength.[1] He excelleth in both these so much, that his answer is indeed divine. He is another manner of man here than he was before. Furthermore, this profiteth us two manner of ways. For this title, or commendation, is of no small force to set forth the doctrine which shall follow immediately, when it is said that it came from the Holy God, [Spirit.] And we are taught to crave at the hands of the Lord the Spirit of wisdom and strength, when we make profession of our faith, to direct our hearts and minds.

[1] "Fortitudine et prudentia," prudence and fortitude.

The fulness of the Spirit is taken for a large and no common measure.

9. *If we be judged.* Undoubtedly Peter layeth tyranny to the charge of the priests and the scribes, because they examine them unjustly concerning a benefit which deserveth praise, as if he and his fellow had committed some heinous offence. If, saith he, we be accused for this cause, because we have made a sick man whole. Peter hath in this place more respect unto the wicked affection of the mind than unto the very order of the question. For if, under colour of a miracle, the apostles would have drawn away the people from the true and sincere worship of God, they should have been worthily called to answer for themselves; because religion doth far excel all the good things of this present life. But seeing they (having no cause at all) did wickedly make an offence of that which they ought to have honoured, Peter, being supported with this confidence, doth at the first gird them wittily with a taunting preface, because they sit as judges to condemn good deeds. Yet he toucheth this point but lightly, that he may pass over unto the matter.

10. *Be it known unto you.* Peter might (as I have already said) have turned aside unto many starting-holes,[1] if he would not have entered the cause;[2] but because the miracle was wrought, to this end, that the name of Christ might be glorified, he descendeth by and by unto this. For he knew that he was the minister of such excellent power of God, that he might have a seal to confirm his doctrine. In the meanwhile, the wicked, will they, nil they, are enforced to hear that which they would have had buried full deep. When they have done what they can, this is all; they cause Peter to avouch and object to their faces, that wherewith they were so grieved, when it was spoken to others. And, first, he maketh Christ the author of the miracle. Secondly,

[1] "Subterfugia," subterfuges. [2] "Si noluisset causam ingredi," if he had been unwilling to enter upon the cause.

because it seemed to be an absurd and incredible thing, that a dead man should be endued with divine power, he testifieth that Christ is alive, because God hath raised him up from the dead, howsoever they had crucified him. So that the miracle giveth him occasion to preach the resurrection of Christ. And by this testimony Peter meant to prove that he was the true Messias. He saith that they had crucified him, not only to the end he may upbraid this unto them, that they may acknowledge their fault; but also that they may understand that they have in vain striven against God; and so, consequently, cease to rage so unluckily and with such deadly success.

11. *This is the stone.* He confirmeth by testimony of Scripture that it is no new thing that the ringleaders[1] of the Church, which have glorious titles given them, and have the chief room in the temple of God, have, notwithstanding, wickedly rejected Christ. Therefore he citeth a place out of the 118th Psalm, (Psal. cxviii. 22,) where David complaineth that he is rejected of the captains [leaders] of the people, and yet, notwithstanding, he boasteth that he was chosen of God to have the chief room. Moreover, he compareth the Church, or the state of the kingdom, by an usual metaphor to a building. He calleth those which have the government the masters of the work,[2] and he maketh himself the principal stone, whereon the whole building is stayed and grounded. For that is meant by the head of the corner. Therefore, this is David's comfort, that howsoever the captains have rejected him, so that they would not grant him even the basest place, yet did not their wicked and ungodly endeavours hinder him from being extolled by God unto the highest degree of honour. But that was shadowed in David which God would have perfectly expressed in the Messias. Therefore Peter dealeth very aptly when as he citeth this testimony, as being spoken before of Christ, as they knew full well that it did agree properly to him. Now we know

[1] "Præsules," prelates.

[2] "Architectos," the architects.

to what end Peter did cite the Psalm; to wit, lest the elders and priests being unadvisedly puffed up with their honour, should take to themselves authority and liberty to allow or disallow whatsoever they would. For it is evident that the stone refused by the chief builders is placed by God's own hand in the chief place, that it may support the whole house.

Furthermore, this happeneth not once only, but it must be fulfilled daily; at least it must seem no new thing if the chief builders do even now reject Christ. Whereby the vain boasting of the Pope is plainly refuted, who maketh his boast of the bare title, that he may usurp whatsoever is Christ's. Admit we grant to the Pope and his horned beasts that which they desire, to wit, that they are appointed to be ordinary pastors of the Church, they can go no farther at length than to be called chief builders with Annas and Caiaphas. And it is evident what account ought to be made of this title, which they think is sufficient to mix heaven and earth together. Now let us gather out of this place some things which are worth the noting. Forasmuch as they are called master-builders who have government of the Church, the name itself putteth them in mind of their duty. Therefore, let them give themselves wholly to the building of the temple of God. And because all men do not their duty faithfully as they ought, let them see what is the best manner of building aright, to wit, let them retain Christ for the foundation; that done, let them not mix straw and stubble in this building, but let them make the whole building of pure doctrine; as Paul teacheth in 1 Cor. iii. 12. Whereas God is said to have extolled Christ, who was rejected of the builders, this ought to comfort us, when as we see even the pastors of the Church, or, at least, those which are in great honour, wickedly rebel against Christ, that they may banish him. For we may safely set light by those visors which they object against us; so that we need not fear to give Christ that honour which God doth give to him. But if he wink for a time, yet doth he laugh at the boldness of his enemies from on high, whilst they

rage and fret upon earth. Furthermore, though their conspiracies be strong and well guarded with all aids, yet must we always assure ourselves of this, that Christ's honour shall remain safe and sound. And let the fruit of this confidence ensue also, that we be valiant and without fear in maintaining the kingdom of Christ, whereof God will be an invincible defender, as he himself affirmeth.

We have already spoken of Peter's constancy, in that one simple man, having such envious judges, and yet having but one partner in the present danger, showeth no token at all of fear, but doth freely confess in that raging and furious company, that thing which he knew would be received with most contrary minds. And whereas he sharply upbraideth unto them that wickedness which they had committed, we must fet [seek] from hence a rule of speech when we have to deal with the open enemies of the truth. For we must beware of two faults on this behalf, that we seem not to flatter by keeping silence or winking; for that were treacherous silence, whereby the truth should be betrayed. Again, that we be not puffed up with wantonness, or immoderate heat, as men's minds do oftentimes break out more than they ought in contention. Therefore, let us use gravity in this point, yet such as is moderate; let us chide freely, yet without all heat of railing. We see that Peter did observe this order. For at the first he giveth an honourable title; when he is once come to the matter he inveigheth sharply against them; neither could such ungodliness as theirs was be concealed. Those which shall follow this example shall not only have Peter to be their guide, but also the Spirit of God.

12. *Neither is there salvation in any other.* He passeth from the *species* [salvation] unto the *genus*, [or more particular,] and he goeth from the corporal benefit unto perfect health, [or general.] And assuredly Christ had showed this one token of his grace, to the end he might be known to be the only author of life. We must consider this in all the benefits of God, to wit, that he is the fountain of salva-

tion. And he meant to prick and sting the priests with this sentence, when as he saith that there is salvation in none other save only in Christ, whom they went about to put quite out of remembrance.[1] As if he should say, that they are twice damned who did not only refuse the salvation offered them by God, but endeavour to bring the same to nought, and did take from all the people the fruit and use thereof. And although he seemeth to speak unto deaf men, yet doth he preach of the grace of Christ, if peradventure some can abide to hear; if not, that they may at least be deprived of all excuse by this testimony.

Neither is there any other name. He expoundeth the sentence next going before. Salvation (saith he) is in Christ alone, because God hath decreed that it should be so. For by *name* he meaneth the cause or mean, as if he should have said, forasmuch as salvation is in God's power only, he will not have the same to be common to us by any other means than if we ask it of Christ alone. Whereas he saith *under heaven*, they do commonly refer it unto creatures, as if he should say, that the force and power to save is given to Christ alone. Notwithstanding, I do rather think that this was added, because men cannot ascend into heaven, that they may come unto God. Therefore, seeing we are so far from the kingdom of God, it is needful that God do not only invite us unto himself, but that reaching out his hand he offer salvation unto us, that we may enjoy the same. Peter teacheth in this place, that he hath done that in Christ, because he came down into the earth for this cause, that he might bring salvation with him. Neither is that contrary to this doctrine, that Christ is ascended above all heavens, (Eph. iv. 10.) For he took upon him our flesh once for this cause, that he might be a continual pledge of our adoption. He hath reconciled the Father to us for ever by the sacrifice of his death: by his resurrection he hath purchased for us eternal life. And he is present with us now also, that he may make us partakers of the

[1] "Extinguere," to extinguish or annihilate.

fruit of eternal redemption; but the revealing of salvation is handled in this place, and we know that the same was so revealed in Christ, that we need not any longer to say, "Who shall ascend into heaven?" (Rom. x. 6.) And if so be this doctrine were deeply imprinted in the minds of all men, then should so many controversies concerning the causes of salvation be soon at an end, wherewith the Church is so much troubled. The Papists confess with us, that salvation is in God alone, but by and by they forge to themselves infinite ways to attain unto the same. But Peter calleth us back unto Christ alone. They dare not altogether deny that we have salvation given us by Christ; but whilst they feign so many helps, they leave him scarce the hundredth part of salvation. But they were to seek for salvation at the hands of Christ wholly; for when Peter excludeth plainly all other means, he placeth perfect salvation in Christ alone, and not some part thereof only. So that they are far from understanding this doctrine.

13. *And when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and considered that they were men unlearned and ignorant, they wondered; and they knew them, that they had been with Jesus.*
14. *And when they saw the man that had been healed standing with them, they could not say against it.*
15. *But when they had commanded them to depart out of the council, they consulted among themselves,*
16. *Saying, What shall we do to these men? For a manifest sign is done by them, and it is openly known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; neither can we deny it.*
17. *But lest it be noised any farther among the people, in threatening let us threaten them, that they speak not henceforth to any man in this name.*
18. *And then when they had called them, they charged them that they should not speak at all, or teach, in the name of Jesus.*

13. Here may we see an evil conscience; for being destitute of right and reason, they break out into open

tyranny, the hatred whereof they had essayed to escape. Therefore, he doth first declare that they were convict, that it may appear that they did war against God wittingly and willingly like giants. For they see a manifest work of his in the man which was healed, and yet do they wickedly set themselves against him. In as much as they know that Peter and John were men unlearned and ignorant, they acknowledge that there was somewhat more than belongeth to man in their boldness; therefore they are enforced to wonder whether they will or no. Yet they break out into such impudence, that they fear not to seek some tyrannous means to oppress the truth. When as they confess that it is a manifest sign, they condemn themselves therein of an evil conscience. When they say that it is known to all men, they declare that passing over God they have respect unto men only. For they betray their want of shame thereby, that they would not have doubted to turn their back if there had been any colour of denial. And when they ask what they shall do, they make their obstinate wickedness known unto all men. For they would have submitted themselves unto God, unless devilish fury had carried them away to some other purpose. This is the spirit of giddiness and madness, wherewith God doth make his enemies drunk. So when they hope shortly after that they can by threatenings bring it about, that the same shall go no farther, what can be more foolish? For after they have put two simple men to silence, shall the arm of God be broken?

17. *In threatening let us threaten.* Here may we see what a deadly evil power void of the fear of God is. For when that religion and reverence which ought doth not reign, the more holy the place is which a man doth possess, the more boldly[1] doth he rage. For which cause we [should] always take good heed that the wicked be not preferred unto the government of the Church. And those

[1] "Audacius," audaciously.

which are called to this function must behave themselves reverently and modestly, lest they seem to be armed to do hurt. But and if it so happen they abuse their honour, the Spirit declareth there, as in a glass, what small account we ought to make of their decrees and commandments.[1] The authority of the pastors hath certain bounds appointed which they may not pass. And if they dare be so bold, we may lawfully refuse to obey them; for if we should, it were in us great wickedness, as it followeth now.

19. *And Peter and John answered them, and said, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than to God, judge ye.*
20. *For we cannot but speak those things which we have seen and heard.*
21. *And when they had threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing for which they might punish them, because of the people; for all men did glorify God because of that which was done.*
22. *For the man was more than forty years old on whom the sign of healing was showed.*
23. *Furthermore, when they were let go, they came to their fellows, and told them whatsoever things the priests and elders had said.*

19. *Whether it be right.* Let us remember to whom they make this answer. For this council did undoubtedly represent the Church; but because they do abuse their authority, the apostles say flatly that they are not to be obeyed. And (as men use to do in an evident matter) they refer over the judgment unto their adversaries for a reproach unto them. Furthermore, it is worth the noting, that they set the authority of God against their decrees; which thing should be done out of season, unless they were the enemies of God, who, notwithstanding, were otherwise the ordinary pastors of the Church. Moreover, the apostles express a farther thing also, to wit, that the obedience

[1] "Quam pro nihilo ducendum sit quicquid decernunt et jubent," that whatever they order and decree ought to be held as null.

which men use toward evil and unfaithful pastors, howsoever they hold the lawful government of the Church, is contrary to God. This question doth the Pope answer pleasantly,[1] because he saith that all those things are divine oracles whatsoever it hath pleased him to blunder out unadvisedly.[2] By this means the danger of contrariety is taken away. But the bishops can challenge no more at this day than God had given then to the order of the priests. Therefore, this is a toy too childish, [viz.] that they can command nothing but that which is agreeable to the commandment of God.[3] Yea, rather the thing itself declareth evidently that there shall be no conflict then if they suffer their vain and unbridled lust to range freely, having vanquished and renounced the doctrine of Christ.

Therefore, by what title soever men be called, yet must we hear them only upon this condition, if they lead us not away from obeying God. So that we must examine all their traditions by the rule of the Word of God. We must obey princes and others which are in authority, yet so that they rob not God (who is the chief King, Father, and Lord) of his right and authority. If we must observe such modesty in politic [civil] government, it ought to be of far more force in the spiritual government of the Church. And lest, according to their wonted pride, they think that their authority is abated, when God is extolled above them, Peter draweth them away from such pleasant flattering of themselves, telling them that this matter must be determined before the judgment-seat of God; for he saith plainly *before* [in the sight of] God; because, howsoever men be blinded, yet will God never suffer any man to be preferred before him. And surely the Spirit did put this answer in the mouth of the apostles, not only to the end he might repress the furiousness of the enemies, but that he might also teach us what we ought to do, so often as men become so proud,

[1] "Hanc quæstionem lepide diremit Papa," the Pope wittily disposes of this question. [2] "Effutire," to babble forth. [3] "Non posse eos nisi ex Dei mandato præcipere," that no command can possibly proceed from them without being agreeable to the will of God.

that having shaken off the yoke of God, they will lay their own yoke upon us. Therefore, let us then remember this holy authority of God, which is able to drive away the vain smoke of all man's excellency.

20. *For we cannot.* Many things which are found out by hearing and seeing may, yea, ought to be concealed, when as the question is concerning the redeeming of peace. For this is a point of discourtesy and of wicked stubbornness to move and raise a tumult about unnecessary matters; but the apostles do not speak generally, when as they say they cannot but speak. For the gospel of Christ is now in hand, wherein consisteth both the glory of God and the salvation of men. It is an unmeet thing, and sacrilegious wickedness, that the same should be suppressed by prohibitions and menacings[1] of men; for God commandeth that his gospel be preached, especially since they did know that they were chosen to be witnesses and preachers of Christ, and that God had opened their mouth. Therefore, whosoever putteth them to silence, he endeavoureth so much as he is able to abolish the grace of God, and fordo [destroy] the salvation of men. And if so be that a prohibition so wicked do stop our mouths, woe be to our sluggishness. Now, let all men see what confession God requireth at their hands, lest, when they keep silence because of men, they hear a fearful voice proceed out of the mouth of Christ, whereby their unfaithfulness shall be condemned. And as for those which are called unto the office of teaching, let them be terrified with no threatenings of men, with no colour of authority, but let them execute[2] that office which they know is enjoined them by God. Woe be unto me, saith Paul, if I preach not the gospel, because the function is committed unto me, (1 Cor. ix. 16.) Neither ought we only to set this commandment of God against the tyrannous commandments of men, but also against all lets which Satan doth oftentimes thrust in to break off and hinder

[1] "Interdictis," the interdicts. [2] "Libere," freely, omitted.

the course of the gospel. For we have need of a strong buckler to bear off such sore assaults, which all the ministers of Christ do feel; but howsoever we speed, this is a brazen wall, that the preaching of the gospel doth please God, and therefore that it can for no cause be suppressed.

21. *And when they had threatened them.* And here is the end of sedition, that the wicked cease not to breathe out their fury, yet are they bridled by the secret power of God, so that they cannot tell how to do any hurt.[1] How is it that being content with threatenings, they do not also rage against their bodies, save only because the power of God doth bind them as a chain? Not that the fear of God doth prevail with them, for it is the regard of the people alone which hindereth them; but the Lord doth bind them with his bonds, though they be ignorant thereof. Luke commendeth unto us the providence of God in preserving his children; and though it be hidden from the wicked, yet we may behold the same with the eyes of faith. Furthermore, the wonderful counsel of God doth show itself here, in that the glory of Christ is furthered by those which are his most deadly enemies. For whereas the priests do assemble themselves together, it is not done without great rumour. All men wait for some rare and singular event; the apostles depart, being let loose and acquitted. Therefore, the adversaries are not only vanquished, but they confirm the gospel against their will. Notwithstanding, it is expedient for us to mark again, that the faithful do so get the victory, that they are always humbled under the cross. For they are threatened again, and straitly charged, that they teach not henceforth in the name of Christ. Therefore, they do not so get the upper hand that they do not triumph, save only under the reproach of the cross. Whereas Luke saith that they did *all glorify God*, he noteth the fruit of the miracle now the second time, although it may be that they were not all brought unto the perfect end. For that man which is

[1] "Ut illis nocendi via non pateat," that they have no means of doing hurt.

touched with the feeling of the power of God, and doth not come unto Christ, neither hath his faith confirmed by the miracle, he stayeth, as it were, in the midway. Yet this was some thing, though not all, that the power of God was acknowledged in the healing of the man, so that the adversaries being ashamed, did cease off from their fury, or at least give back a little.

23. *Furthermore, when they were let go.* It shall appear by and by to what end they declared to the other disciples what things had befallen them, to wit, that they might be the more emboldened and encouraged by the grace of God hereafter; secondly, that they might arm themselves with prayer against the furious threatenings of their enemies; and thus must the children of God do, one must prick forward another, and they must join hand in hand, that they may vanquish the common adversary fighting under Christ's banner. They consider[1] with themselves what dangers hang over their heads, to the end they may be the more ready to enter[2] the same, although they see their enemies press sore upon them; yet lest it should grieve them[3] to have a new combat ever now and then, they assure[4] themselves that they shall be invincible[5] through the same power of God whereby they got the victory before. And it is to be thought (although Luke makes no mention thereof) that the apostles being contented with their former answer, did not contend with those furies, [furious men;] and yet we must persuade ourselves that they were not so forgetful of their former constancy that they did submit themselves unto their ungodly decree like slaves.[6]

24. *And when they had heard it, they lifted up their voice unto God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things which are therein;*

[1] "Reputent," let them consider. [2] "Obeundis," to obviate or face them. [3] "Ne pigeat," let it not grieve them. [4] "Confidant," let them confide. [5] "Semper inexpugnabiles," always invincible. [6] "Ut serviliter excipient," as servilely to submit.

25. *Which by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why have the heathen raged together, and why have the people imagined vain things?*
26. *The kings of the earth have stood up, and the rulers have met together against the Lord, and against his Christ.*
27. *For of a truth, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, have come together in this city against thy holy Son, Jesus,*
28. *That they might do whatsoever thine hand and thy counsel had decreed before to be done.*
29. *And now, O Lord, look upon the threatenings of these men; and grant unto thy servants that they may speak thy word with boldness;*
30. *Reaching out thine hand to this end, that healing, and signs, and wonders, may be done by the name of thy holy Son, Jesus.*
31. *And when they had prayed, the place moved wherein they were assembled: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and did speak the word of God with boldness.*

We are taught by this example what is our duty to do when our adversaries do imperiously threaten us; for we must not carelessly laugh in time of danger, but the fear of danger ought to drive us to crave help at the hands of God, and this is a remedy to comfort and set us up on foot, lest, being terrified with threatenings, we cease off from doing our duty. Here is a double fruit of this history, that the disciples of Christ do not jest when they hear that their enemies do threaten them so sore, and press so sore upon them, as careless and sluggish men use to do; but being touched with fear, they fly to seek help at the hands of God; and again, they are not terrified, neither yet do they conceive any immoderate fear;[1] but crave of God[2] invincible constancy with right godly petitions.

24. *Thou art God, which hast created.* Although this title and commendation of God's power be general, yet it ought to be referred unto the present matter, for they do in such sort

[1] "Qui eos ab officio abducat," which might draw them off from their duty. [2] "Eniti," struggle after.

acknowledge the power of God in the creation of the whole world, that they apply the same therewithal unto the present use. In like sort, the prophets do oftentimes commend the same, to the end they may redress that fear which troubleth us when we behold the power of our enemies; secondly, they add thereunto the promise, and they make these two foundations of their boldness whereby they are emboldened to pray. And surely our prayers are such as they ought to be, and acceptable to God only then, when as staying ourselves upon his promises and power, we pray with certain hope to obtain that for which we pray, for we cannot otherwise have any true confidence unless God do will us to come unto him, and promise that he is ready to help us; and, secondly, unless we acknowledge that he is able enough to help us; wherefore let the faithful exercise themselves in this double meditation so often as they address themselves unto prayer. Furthermore, we gather hereby after what sort we ought to consider the creation of the world; to wit, that we may know that all things are subject to God, and ruled by his will, and when that the world hath done what it can, there shall no other thing come to pass but that which God hath decreed; yea, that the wantonness of the wicked is monstrous, as if the clay should resist the potter; for this is the meaning of the faithful generally, that whatsoever dangers hang over their heads, yet can God prevent the same infinite ways, forasmuch as all things are in his hand, and that he is able to make all the parts of heaven and earth (which he hath created) to obey him.

25. *Who by the mouth of David.* They descend now into the second member, that they ask nothing but that which God hath promised to perform, so that his will and power are joined together, to the end they may fully assure themselves that they shall obtain their requests; and because the kingdom of Christ is now in hand, they make rehearsal of the promise of God, wherein he promiseth to defend and maintain the same, so that when the whole world hath done what it can to overthrow it, yet all shall be in vain; and herein

appeareth their godliness and sincere zeal, in that they are not so much careful for their own safety, as for the increasing and advancement of the kingdom of Christ.

Why have the Gentiles raged? We must need confess that David speaketh of himself, who, after he was chosen king by the Lord, and anointed by Samuel the prophet, did enjoy the kingdom very hardly,[1] because his enemies withstood him on every side. We know how the rulers and people conspired together with Saul and his family; after that the Philistines, and other strange enemies, despising him when he came newly to the crown, made war against him, striving who should begin first, wherefore it is not without cause that he complaineth that the kings rage and take counsel together, and that the people do go about divers things; nevertheless, because he knew that God was the supporter of his kingdom, he derideth their foolish enterprises, and affirmeth that they are vain; but because his kingdom was established, that it might be a figure or image of the kingdom of Christ, David doth not stay still in the shadow itself, but he apprehendeth the body, yea, the Holy Ghost, as the apostles do truly repeat the same, doth sharply reprove the foolish and ridiculous madness of the world, in that they dare invade the kingdom of Christ which God had established, as well in the person of David as of Christ himself. And this is a singular comfort, in that we hear that God is on our side, so long as we go on warfare under the kingdom of Christ. Hereby we may persuade ourselves, that howsoever all men, both high and low, do wickedly conspire together against this kingdom, yet shall they not prevail, for what is all the whole world compared with God? But we must first of all know and assure ourselves of this, that God will continually maintain the kingdom of his Son, whereof he himself is the author, so that we may set his decree (which shall not be broken) against the rashness of men, that trusting to the help of his hand, we may not doubt to despise all the preparation and furniture of men, though they be ter-

[1] "Per summas difficultates regno potitus est," came to the kingdom through the greatest difficulties.

rible; and he doth diligently express how great the bands of the adversaries are; he saith, that they attempt all things, he doth also reckon up their counsels, lest any of these do terrify us. Furthermore, when as the Psalm teacheth, that the kingdom of Christ shall endure, maugre the heads of the adversaries, it doth also show that there shall be many adversaries, which shall endeavour to overthrow the same. On the one side, he bringeth in the kings raging, on the other, the people all out of quiet,[1] whereby he signifieth that all estates shall be offended at it;[2] and no marvel, because nothing is more contrary to the flesh than the spiritual sword of the gospel wherewith Christ killeth us, that he may make us obey him, (Rom. xv. 16.) Therefore, we must know this for a surety, that the kingdom of Christ shall never be quiet in the world, lest when we are to fight, we be afraid as at some strange thing.

26. *Against the Lord, and his Christ.* The Spirit teacheth by this word, that all those do make war against God which refuse to submit themselves to Christ; they do full little think this oftentimes, notwithstanding it is so, that because God will reign in the person of his Son alone, we refuse to obey him so often as we rebel against Christ, as the Lord himself saith in John, "He which honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father." Wherefore, let the hypocrites profess a thousand times that they mean nothing less than to make war against God, yet shall they find this true, that God is their open enemy, unless they embrace Christ with his gospel. The use of this doctrine is double, for it armeth us against all the terrors of the flesh, because we must not fear, lest they get the victory of God which withstand the gospel. Again, we must beware, lest, through the contempt of godly doctrine, we advance ourselves against God to our own destruction.

27. *Have met together in this city.* They declare that this

[1] "Tumultuantes," in tumult. [2] "Infensos illi," hostile to it.

meanwhile, he doth not consider that he lieth and deceiveth in the sight of God, and that God will punish this lie. So it is, that he honoureth the apostles' feet more than God's eyes. Wherefore, we must take good heed, that when we do well, we do not seek to be praised of the bystanders;[1] and it is not without cause that Christ saith, that it is profitable for us when we give our alms, to have the left hand ignorant of that which the right hand doth.

3. *And Peter said.* How did Peter know Ananias' fraud (and purloining?) Undoubtedly by the revelation of the Spirit. Therefore, Luke signifieth unto us, that the apostles did after a sort represent God's person, and supply his room. If the Spirit of God, by the mouth of a mortal man, do so sore urge an hypocrite, being otherwise painted with the beautiful colour of virtues, how shall the reprobate abide the voice of God himself, with the sound of the trumpet, when they shall appear before his judgment-seat? Furthermore, Peter pointeth out the cruelness and horribleness of the offence[2] by his question, when he saith, that Satan had filled the heart of Ananias. For there is no man whose heart is not pricked with the pricks of Satan, and all men are also many ways tempted, yea, these temptations pierce into their minds; but where Satan possesseth the heart, he reigneth in the whole man, having, as it were, expelled God. This is a sign of a reprobate, to be so addicted and given over to Satan, that the Spirit of God hath no place. That which followeth afterward concerning lying may have a double sense; either that he did falsely bear a show of the Spirit, or that he lied against the Spirit. And, indeed, it is word for word *mentiri Spiritum;* but forasmuch as the Greek word ψευδεσθαι is joined with a double accusative case, and that doth better agree with the text, [context,] I am rather of this mind, that Ananias is reprehended, because he did

[1] "Theatri plausum appetamus," long for the plaudits of a theatre.
[2] "Criminis atrocitatem," the atrocity of the crime.

lie falsely to the Holy Ghost. Which he confirmeth shortly after, when he upbraideth this unto him, that he hath lied unto God, and not unto men. Wherefore we must take great heed, that hypocrisy reign not in us, which hath this wickedness proper to it, to go about to deceive God, and, as it were, *cornicum oculos configere*, To go about to make blind those which are most wise;[1] which cannot be without a disloyal and unseemly mock. Wherefore it is not without cause that Peter saith, that where this cometh to pass the heart is possessed of Satan. For who durst (unless he were void of reason) so blaspheme God? Therefore, Peter asketh him as of some wonder, because such blindness is horrible.

4. *Did it not, remaining.* This amplifieth the offence, because he sinned, being enforced by no necessity. For seeing it is no just or lawful excuse to have been provoked by some other means, how much worse is it to run headlong unto wickedness willingly, and, as it were, of set purpose to pull down God's vengeance? We gather out of this, that no man was enforced to sell his goods or lands. For Peter saith, that Ananias had free liberty to keep both his land and his money; because, in the second member, the field which was sold is taken for the price itself. Therefore, he should nevertheless have been counted faithful, though he had kept that which was his own. Whereby it appeareth that they are men destitute of their right wits, who say that it is not lawful for the faithful to have anything of their own.

Thou hast not lied to men, but to God. Although the words be diversely construed, yet do I not doubt but that this confirmeth the former sentence. For hypocrites do so enwrap themselves in so many shifts, that they think they have nothing to do with God. And Peter speaketh thus expressly, because Ananias had deceived the Church. But he ought to have considered, that "where two or three be gathered

[1] "Veluti cornici, uti proverbio dicitur, configere oculos," and as the proverb says, "put out the eyes of a crow."

his own person. And they crave at God's hands that he will beat down the cruelty of the adversaries; yet not so much for their own sake, that they may live quietly and without vexation, as that they may have liberty to preach the gospel in all places. Neither was it for them to desire a life which they might spend idly, having forsaken their calling. For they add, "Grant unto thy servants, O Lord, that they may speak boldly." And by the way we must note this speech, that the Lord would behold their threatenings. For seeing it belongeth properly to him to resist the proud, and to throw down their lofty looks; the more proudly they brag and boast, the more do they undoubtedly provoke God to be displeased with them, and it is not to be doubted but that God, being offended with such indignity and cruelty, will redress the same. So Ezechias, to the end he may obtain help in extremity, declareth before the Lord the arrogancy of Sennacherib and his cruel threatenings, (Isa. xxxvii. 14 and 17.) Wherefore let the cruelty and reproaches of our enemies rather stir up in us a desire to pray, than any whit discourage us from going forward in the course of our office.

30. *Grant unto thy servants.* Seeing that one miracle had stinged the enemy so sore, how is it that these holy men do desire to have new miracles done daily? Therefore we gather that hence, which I have already touched, that they make so great account of the glory of God, that, in comparison of this, they set light by all other things. They have respect unto this one thing only, that the power of God may be declared by miracles, which the godly ought always to desire, although the adversaries burst, and all the whole hell do rage. The same must we also think of boldness to speak. They knew that the wicked could abide nothing worse than the free course of the gospel; but because they know that that is the doctrine of life, which God will have published whatsoever befal; they do undoubtedly prefer the preaching thereof before all other things, because it is acceptable to God. And we are

taught that we do then rightly acknowledge the benefits of God as we ought, if by this occasion we be pricked forward to pray, that he will confirm that which he hath begun. The apostles had showed a token of heroic fortitude; now again they pray that they may be furnished with boldness. So Paul desireth the faithful to pray unto the Lord that his mouth may be opened, whereas, notwithstanding, his voice did sound everywhere, (Ephes. vi. 19.) Therefore, the more we perceive ourselves to be holpen by the Lord, let us learn to crave at the hands of God that we may go forward hereafter; and especially seeing the free confession of the gospel is a singular gift of God, we must continually beseech him to keep us in the same.

31. *And when they had prayed.* Luke declareth now that God did not only hear this prayer, but did also testify the same by a visible sign from heaven. For the shaking of the place should, of itself, have done them small good; but it tendeth to another end, that the faithful may know that God is present with them. Finally, it is nothing else but a token of the presence of God. But the fruit followeth, for they are all filled with the Holy Ghost, and endowed with greater boldness. We ought rather to stand upon this second member. For whereas God did declare his power then by shaking the place, it was a rare and extraordinary thing; and whereas it appeared by the effect, that the apostles did obtain that which they desired, this is a perpetual profit of prayer, which is also set before us for an example.

32. *And the multitude which believed had one heart and one soul; and no man did say that any of those things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.*

33. *And the apostles did bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ with great power; and great grace was upon them all.*

34. *For there was none among them that lacked: for so many*

as possessed lands or houses, selling them, they brought the price of those things which were sold,

35. *And they laid it at the feet of the apostles: and it was distributed to every man according as he had need.*

6. *And Joses, which was surnamed of the apostles Barnabas, (which is, The son of comfort,) a Levite, of the country of Cyprus,*

37. *Whereas he had land, he sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

32. *And the multitude.* In this place there are three things commended; that the faithful were all of one mind; that there was a mutual partaking of goods amongst them; that the apostles behaved themselves stoutly in announcing the resurrection of Christ. He saith that the multitude *had one heart;* because this is far more excellent than if a few men should have a mutual consent. And heretofore he hath declared, that the Church did grow to be about five thousand. And now he saith that there was wonderful concord in so great a multitude, which is a very hard matter.

And surely where faith beareth the chief sway, it doth so knit the hearts of men together, that all of them do both will and nill one thing. For discord springeth hence, because we are not all governed with the same Spirit of Christ. It is well known that by these two words, *heart* and *soul,* he meaneth the will. And because the wicked do oftentimes conspire together to do evil, this concord was laudable and holy therefore, because it was amongst the faithful.

And no man did say. This is the second member; that they coupled this love with external benefits. But we shall see anon, after what sort they had their goods common. This is now worth the noting in the text of Luke, that the inward unity of minds goeth before as the root, and then the fruit followeth after. And surely even we ought to observe the same order, we must love one another,[1] and then this love of ours must show itself by external

[1] "Sincero cordis affectu," with sincere affection of heart, omitted.

effects.[1] And in vain do we boast of a right affection, unless there appear some testimony thereof in external offices. Moreover, Luke declareth therewithal, that they were not of one mind for any respect of their own commodity, forasmuch as the rich men, when they did liberally bestow their goods, sought nothing less than their own gain.

33. *And with great power.* This third member appertaineth to doctrine. For Luke doth signify that the zeal which the apostles had to preach the gospel was so far from being diminished, that they were rather endowed with new power. Whereas he doth only name the resurrection of Christ, it is *synecdoche;* for this part is put for the whole gospel. But Luke maketh mention of the resurrection alone, because it is, as it were, the furnishing or fulfilling of the gospel; and, secondly, because they had endured a sore combat for the same, and the Sadducees were sore grieved at it, who did then bear the chief swinge, [sway.]

And great grace was. He signifieth that this served not a little to the spreading abroad of doctrine, in that, by helping the poor so bountifully, they found favour at the hands of strangers. For he saith that they were beloved, because they were beneficial.[2] Therefore, there is a showing of a reason in these words, No man amongst them did lack. Although we need not doubt of this, but that their honesty, and temperance, and modesty, and patience, and other virtues, did provoke many to bear them good-will. He declareth[3] afterward, after what sort they had their goods common, which he had touched before, to wit, that the rich men sold their lands and houses, that they might relieve the poverty of the poor.

34. *For so many as were.* Although this be an universal

[1] "Nam et externa beneficentia nisi oriatur ex corde, nihili est coram Deo," for even external beneficence, if it comes not from the heart, is of no value in the sight of God, omitted. [2] "Benefici," beneficent. [3] "Latius exponit," expoundeth more at large.

speech, yet is it all one as if it were indefinite. And assuredly it is to be thought that there were many which did not diminish their possessions, and that may be gathered out of the text, [context.] For when he speaketh of Joses anon, undoubtedly he meant to note a notable example, passing all others. Therefore he saith, that all did that which many did every where; neither doth this disagree with the common use of the Scripture. Again, he meaneth not that the faithful sold all that they had, but only so much as need required. For this is spoken for amplification's sake, that the rich men did not only relieve the poverty of their brethren of the yearly revenue of their lands, but they were so liberal, that they spared not their lands. And this might be, though they did not rob themselves of all, but only a little diminish their revenues; which we may gather again out of the words of Luke, for he saith that this was the end, that no man might lack. He showeth further, that they used great wisdom,[1] because it was distributed as every man had need. Therefore the goods were not equally divided, but there was a discreet distribution made, lest any should be out of measure oppressed with poverty. And, peradventure, Joses hath this commendation given him by name, because he sold his only possession. For by this means he passed all the rest.

Hereby it appeareth what that meaneth, that no man counted anything his own, but they had all things common. For no man had his own privately to himself, that he alone might enjoy the same, neglecting others; but as need required, they were ready to bestow upon all men. And now we must needs have more than iron bowels, seeing that we are no more moved with the reading of this history. The faithful did at that day give abundantly even of that which was their own, but we are not only content at this day wickedly to suppress that which we have in our hands, but do also rob others. They did

[1] "Adhibitam fuisse prudentiam," that prudence was used.

simply and faithfully bring forth their own; we invent a thousand subtile shifts to draw all things unto us by hook or by crook. They laid it down at the apostles' feet, we fear not with sacrilegious boldness to convert that to our own use which was offered to God. They sold in times past their possessions, there reigneth at this day an insatiable desire to buy. Love made that common to the poor and needy which was proper to every man; such is the unnaturalness of some men now, that they cannot abide that the poor should dwell upon the earth, that they should have the use of water, air, and heaven.[1]

Wherefore, these things are written for our shame and reproach. Although even the poor themselves are to blame for some part of this evil. For seeing goods cannot be common after this sort, save only where there is a godly agreement, and where there reigneth one heart and one soul; many men are either so proud or unthankful, or slothful, or greedy, or such hypocrites, that they do not only so much as in them lieth quite put out the desire to do well, but also hinder ability. And yet must we remember that admonition of Paul, that we be not weary of well-doing, (Gal. vi. 9.) And whereas, under colour of this, the Anabaptists and fantastical [fanatical] men have made much ado, as if there ought to be no civil property of goods amongst Christians, I have already refuted this folly[2] of theirs in the second chapter. For neither doth Luke in this place prescribe a law to all men which they must of necessity follow, while that he reckoneth up what they did in whom a certain singular efficacy and power of the Holy Spirit of God did show itself; neither doth he speak generally of all men, that it can be gathered that they were not counted Christians which did not sell all that they had.

[1] "Ut communem terræ habitationem, communem aquæ, äeris, et cœli usum pauperibus invideant," that they envy the poor a common dwelling on the earth, the common use of water, air, and sky. [2] "Delirium," delirium.

CHAPTER V.

1. *And a certain man called Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,*
2. *And he kept back part of the price, his wife knowing thereof, and bringing part, he laid it at the apostles' feet.*
3. *And Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart that thou shouldest lie to the Holy Ghost, and keep back part of the price of the ground?*
4. *Did it not, remaining, remain to thee? and, being sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast put this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God.*
5. *And when Ananias heard these words, falling, he yielded up the ghost; and there came great fear upon all those which had heard these things.*
6. *Furthermore, the young men which were present gathered him up, and, carrying him out, they buried him.*

1. THOSE things which Luke hath reported hitherto did show that that company, which was gathered together under the name of Christ, was rather a company of angels than of men. Moreover, that was incredible virtue, that the rich men did despoil themselves of their own accord, not only of their money, but also of their land, that they might relieve the poor. But now he showeth that Satan had invented a shift to get into that holy company, and that under colour of such excellent virtue; for he hath wonderful wiles of hypocrisy to insinuate himself. This way doth Satan assault the Church, when as he cannot prevail by open war. But we must specially in this place have respect unto the drift of the Holy Ghost. For in this history he meant to declare, first, how acceptable singleness of heart is to God, and what an abomination hypocrisy is in his sight; secondly, how greatly he alloweth [approves] the holy and pure policy and government of his Church. For this is the principal point, the punishment wherewith

God punished Ananias and his wife. As the greatness thereof did at that time terrify them all, so it is unto us a testimony that God cannot abide this unfaithfulness, when as bearing a show of holiness where there is none, we do mock him contemptibly. For if, having weighed all the circumstances, we be desirous to know the sum, Luke condemneth no other fault in Ananias than this, that he meant to deceive God and the Church with a feigned offering. Yet there were more evils packed under this dissimulation: the contempt of God, whom he feareth not, though he knew his wickedness; sacrilegious defrauding, because he keepeth back part of that which he professeth to be holy to God; perverse vanity and ambition, because he vaunteth himself in the presence of men, without having any respect unto God's judgment; want of faith, because he would never have gone this way to work, unless he had mistrusted God; the corrupting of a godly and holy order; furthermore, the hypocrisy itself was a great offence of itself.[1] The fact of Ananias did bear a goodly show,[2] although he had given only the half of his land. Neither is this a small virtue, for a rich man to bestow the half of his goods upon the poor; but the sacrifices of the ungodly are an abomination to God, (Prov. xv. 8;) neither can any thing please him where the singleness of heart is wanting. For this cause is it that Christ maketh more account of the two mites offered by the widow, than of the great sums of others, who of their great heaps gave some part, (Luke xxi. 2.) This is the cause why God doth show an example of such sharp punishment in Ananias. Now, let us note every point by itself. *He laid it at the feet of the apostles.* Lo, what ambition doth! Ananias is ashamed not to be accounted one of the best; therefore, although he be greedy of money, yet to the end he may purchase a name amongst men, he depriveth himself of some part of his riches. In the

[1] "Accedit huc quoque obstinata mentiendi audacia," to this was also added an obstinate audacity in lying, omitted. [2] "Præclarum in speciem et memorabile," in appearance noble and memorable.

meanwhile, he doth not consider that he lieth and deceiveth in the sight of God, and that God will punish this lie. So it is, that he honoureth the apostles' feet more than God's eyes. Wherefore, we must take good heed, that when we do well, we do not seek to be praised of the bystanders;[1] and it is not without cause that Christ saith, that it is profitable for us when we give our alms, to have the left hand ignorant of that which the right hand doth.

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lie falsely to the Holy Ghost. Which he confirmeth shortly after, when he upbraideth this unto him, that he hath lied unto God, and not unto men. Wherefore we must take great heed, that hypocrisy reign not in us, which hath this wickedness proper to it, to go about to deceive God, and, as it were, *cornicum oculos configere*, To go about to make blind those which are most wise;[1] which cannot be without a disloyal and unseemly mock. Wherefore it is not without cause that Peter saith, that where this cometh to pass the heart is possessed of Satan. For who durst (unless he were void of reason) so blaspheme God? Therefore, Peter asketh him as of some wonder, because such blindness is horrible.

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Thou hast not lied to men, but to God. Although the words be diversely construed, yet do I not doubt but that this confirmeth the former sentence. For hypocrites do so enwrap themselves in so many shifts, that they think they have nothing to do with God. And Peter speaketh thus expressly, because Ananias had deceived the Church. But he ought to have considered, that "where two or three be gathered

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together in the name of Christ, he is present there as the chief governor," (Matth. xviii. 20;) yea, he ought to have behaved himself no otherwise in that assembly, than if he should have seen God with his eyes. For seeing that God will reign in the Church, if we give him any reverence, we must reverence that rule and government religiously which he exerciseth by his Word. The apostles were indeed men, but not private men, because God had put them in his stead. Furthermore, we must note, that he saith that he lieth to God who doth lie to the Holy Ghost. For the divinity of the Holy Ghost is manifestly proved by this form of speech. In like sort Paul saith, " Ye are the temples of God, because his Spirit dwelleth in you," (1 Cor. iii. 16 and 17; and vi. 19.)

5. *When Ananias heard these things.* The death of Ananias doth, indeed, declare and prove the force of the word, which Paul doth highly extol; to wit, that it is the savour of death unto death to those which perish, (2 Cor. ii. 16.) He speaketh, indeed, of the spiritual death of the soul, but there was a visible sign in the body of Ananias of that punishment which cannot be seen with the eyes of men. He was not slain with sword, by force, nor hand, but was stricken dead with the only hearing of the voice. When we hear this, let the threatenings of the gospel terrify us, and humble us in time, lest we also feel the like effect. For that which is spoken of Christ, " He shall slay the wicked with the breath of his mouth," (Isa. xi. 4,) doth not only appertain to the head of the wicked, but also to every member. For those which refuse the salvation offered in his word, it must needs be deadly to them, which was naturally wholesome. But and if any man do think it an absurd thing that the apostle did punish Ananias bodily, first, I answer, that this was an extraordinary thing; secondly, that this was one of the gifts of the Spirit, as it appeareth by the 12th chapter of the First to the Corinthians, (ver. 10.) After which sort we shall afterward see Elymas, the sorcerer, stricken with blindness by Paul, (Acts xiii. 8.) Therefore, Peter did nothing

which was impertinent to his function, when he did in time shoot that dart which the Holy Ghost had given him. And whereas some think that this was too cruel a punishment, this cometh to pass, because, weighing Ananias' sin in their own and not in God's balance, they count that but a light offence which was a most great and grievous crime, being full of such heinous offences as I have already declared. Other some do think that this was nothing so, because they see many hypocrites escape scot free daily, which do no less mock God than did Ananias; yea, because they themselves being most gross contemners of God, are yet notwithstanding unpunished for their wickedness. But as God hath poured out visible graces upon his Church in the beginning, to the end we may know that he will be present with us by the secret power of his Spirit, yea, he showed that openly by external signs, which we feel inwardly by the experiment of faith; so he declared by the visible punishment of two, how horrible a judgment remaineth for all hypocrites, which shall mock God and his Church.

And there came great fear. This was the Lord's purpose, by punishing one to make the rest afraid, that they might reverently beware of all hypocrisy. And that which Luke saith, that *they feared*, doth appertain unto us also. For God meant to give all ages a lesson at that time, that they may learn to deal sincerely and uprightly with him. In the mean season, the punishment of this wicked person ought to have encouraged the godly hereafter to consecrate their goods more freely to God and the poor; because they might gather how precious alms was in the sight of God, seeing the profaning thereof was so punished.[1]

7. *And there was passed about the space of three hours, when his wife came in, ignorant of that which was done.*
8. *And Peter said unto her, Tell me, sold ye the field for so much? She answered, Surely, for so much.*
9. *And Peter said unto her, What is this that ye are agreed to-*

[1] "Tam graviter," so grievously, severely.

gether to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those which have buried thy husband are at the door, which shall carry thee out.

10. *And immediately she fell down at his feet, and gave up the ghost. Furthermore, when the young men came in, they found her dead, and when they had carried her out, they buried her beside her husband.*

11. *And there came great fear upon all the church, and upon all which heard these things.*

7. That punishment wherewith the Lord punished Sapphira containeth no new thing, save only that the example was the more confirmed thereby. And it came to pass by the certain providence of God, that the Church should see apart the obstinate wickedness and treacherous mind of them both. Seeing their faults were alike, they might have been known together; but this was more fit and profitable for the Church, that they might severally bewray their own wickedness. Neither was Sapphira provoked by the sight of her husband to dissemble, (as it falleth out oftentimes,) that the fault could be ascribed to shamefacedness, but of her own accord, and being pricked forward by no other means, she seemeth to be no better than her husband. Moreover, their wickedness in lying was like, forasmuch as she may see by Peter's interrogation that their guile was found out.

8. *Tell me.* We see that God doth not by and by[1] punish her, but first he trieth the matter thoroughly, lest he should send vengeance upon any save the obstinate, and those which will not be pardoned.[2] For although Sapphira did know that the matter was hidden, she ought to have been stricken with this question of Peter, no otherwise than if she had been cited to appear before the judgment-seat of God. She hath a time granted her to repent; yea, this is, as it were, a pleasant[3] inviting unto repentance. But she,

[1] "Subito impetu," by sudden impulse.

[2] "Qui sibi veniam præcidunt," who cut themselves off from pardon.

[3] "Placida," calm.

in holding on so carelessly,[1] doth declare that she was incurable, because she is touched with no fear of God.

And hereby are we taught to labour diligently to bring sinners into the way. For the Spirit of God keepeth this moderation; but when as stubbornness and the stubborn contempt of God is added unto the offence, it is now high time to punish. Therefore, those men are too arrogant who are displeased with the immoderate rigour of God. It is rather our duty to consider how we shall in time to come[2] stand before the judgment-seat of God; although this is too much to despise his holy power and majesty, if we will have him mocked freely without any punishment. Moreover, so many circumstances, which before I have gathered, do sufficiently prove that Ananias and Sapphira were not worthy of one death only. For, first of all, hypocrisy is of itself very abominable to God. Secondly, whereas they are determined to lie unto God, this ariseth of great contempt, in that they do not reverence and fear Christ, being the Chief Governor of those amongst whom they were. It is ungodliness joined with impudency; because, so they can escape shame and reproach amongst men, before whom they were determined to vaunt and brag, they pass not to deny their manifest wickedness unto God. Whereas they do stubbornly deny their offence, this doth, as it were, make up the heap and measure. And whereas innumerable hypocrites do no less mock God and the Church daily, who, notwithstanding, are not punished with death, I have already showed why this ought to seem to be no inconvenient thing.[4] For asmuch as God is the only Judge of the world, it belongeth to him to punish every man at his pleasure, when and how it seemeth good to him. Wherefore we must not prescribe unto him a certain mean and manner of punishment. But the greatness of the spiritual judgment, which is as yet hid, hath been set before us in the bodily punishment of these, as in a mirror. For if we consider what it is to be cast into eternal

[1] "Pergendo secure," in proceeding securely.
[2] "Absurdum," absurd or strange.
[4] "Olim," one day.

fire, we shall not judge that this is the greatest evil and punishment of all, to fall down dead before men. Look the 10th chapter of the First to the Corinthians, ver. 5.

9. *To tempt the Spirit.* He uttereth the same thing in other words which he had said before; to wit, that they did mock God unreverently and contemptibly. But he said that they *tempted* the Spirit, because they had cunningly packed their fraud, as if the Spirit of God were not the knower of the hearts. For it was a point of too great carelessness, seeing the one made the other privy to their wickedness, to make their match between themselves, having, as it were, excluded God. For the Scripture saith, that God is tempted either when his power is taken from him, or the knowledge of all things is denied him. Furthermore, he meaneth that Spirit which governed the Church by the apostles. For when Christ saith, When the Spirit cometh, he shall judge the world, he noteth no other kind of authority than that which he exerciseth by the ministry of the Church.

11. *And there came fear.* He saith, again, that the punishment of one was a lesson to all. But he plainly expresseth in this place a double fear. He saith that the Church feared, because the faithful do never so perfectly fear God, but that they profit yet more, being admonished by his judgments. Therefore, by all those punishments which we read have been laid upon men in times past, and do daily see to be laid upon them, doth God call us back from the enticements and liberty of sinning. For our flesh must be bridled every now and then after this sort, because one bridle will scarce serve the turn. There was another manner [of] fear in the strangers, yet no such fear as brought them unto the sincere worship of God; yet, notwithstanding, it was such as caused them to give the glory to God.

12. *And by the hands of the apostles were done many signs and wonders amongst the people. And they were all with one accord in the Porch of Solomon.*

13. *And of the other durst no man join himself to them : but the people magnified them.*
14. *And the multitude of those that believed in the Lord, both of men and women, grew more and more.*
15. *So that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them in beds and couches, that at the least way the shadow of Peter, as he came, might shadow some of them.*
16. *And a multitude of the next cities came together to Jerusalem, bringing their sick, and those which were vexed with unclean spirits, which were all healed.*

12. He returneth to miracles of another sort, which are more proper to the gospel; to wit, whereby Christ doth not only declare his power, but also his goodness; to the end he may allure men unto himself with the sweetness of his grace. For he came to save the world, and not to condemn it. Therefore, whereas the sick are healed, and others are delivered from devils, these benefits done to the body do represent the spiritual grace of Christ; and therefore they agree with his natural[1] office, that I may so speak. That fearful sign which was showed in Ananias and Sapphira came to pass extraordinarily.[2] Luke saith that the Church was increased by miracles, because they serve for faith,[3] (as we have said,) to prepare some, to confirm others. Whereby that is proved again, which I have said elsewhere, that miracles must never be separated from the word. Luke showeth the multitude of miracles by this, in that the sick were brought forth everywhere, that they might be healed. For God meant thus to set forth the gospel of his Son, especially at the beginning; that he might for a certainty testify to the Jews, that that restoring of all things was present, which was so often promised, and in which all their hope was reposed, as they themselves did pretend, (and make semblance.) It is well known that couches were certain little beds in which the men of old were wont to rest at noon. Because they might the more easily carry them out, they laid the sick in them.

[1] "Genuino," genuine. [2] "Quasi accidentale erat," was, as it were, accidental. [3] "Fidei subserviunt," are subservient to faith.

And they were all with one accord. He signifieth unto us that they were wont to meet together at certain hours, not only for doctrine and prayers' sake, but that they might win others unto the Lord, as occasion was given. For every man lived at home at his own house, but they had their meetings there, as assuredly no body of the Church can otherwise continue. For if every man will be his own teacher, and pray apart by himself, and if there be no meetings and assemblies, how excellently soever the Church be ordered and appointed, yet must it needs decay and come to nought. He saith that they were all of one mind, to the end we may know that they did all keep that order willingly, that no man was so disordered as to keep himself at home,[1] neglecting the public assembly. Wherein they showed a token, not only of modesty, but also of constancy. For they could not do this without danger, seeing the place was so famous. For which cause, the agreement of them all to put themselves in hazard was so much the more worthy of commendation.

13. *And of other durst no man.* This was the second fruit of the miracles, in that these which believed not, being convict with the excellent power of God, dare not despise the apostles, but are rather enforced to reverence the Church. Yet that might seem an absurd thing, that being terrified with miracles, they flee from God and his people. I answer, that they were letted through their own fault from coming; and it is not to be doubted but that God doth call us unto himself by miracles. Therefore, whosoever they be that go not so far, as willingly to embrace the grace of God which shineth in them, they are letted and hindered by their own perverse and evil conscience. Yet this is some fruit, in that God wringeth some fear out of them; although Luke doth ascribe this not only to the miracle, but rather comprehendeth all together which might serve to the increasing of the dignity of the Church. For all things

[1] "Intra privatos parietes se teneret," as to keep himself within a private building.

were so ordered, that there shined there a certain divine majesty; for they did no less differ from the other than angels from men.

For there is a certain secret majesty in holy discipline and in sincere godliness, which doth even fast bind the wicked whether they will or no. But we know not at this day of what sort the same is; yea, rather, we cause ourselves to be despised together with the gospel, through our profane liberty of evil living. Furthermore, the punishment of Ananias and his wife did not a little terrify the wicked, and keep them from breaking in unadvisedly into the company of those men, where God had showed himself so sharp a Judge. Yet we must note that he speaketh of men which were indifferent in this place, and of those which were not of the worst sort; for there were at that time many at Jerusalem, whom neither the reverence of signs, neither yet of the angelic holiness of the godly, could move. Therefore Luke meaneth moderate men, in whom there are some seed of the fear of God; like as we see at this day certain, whom the vanity of the world keepeth back from submitting their necks unto the yoke of Christ; yet because they smell out some divine thing in our doctrine,[1] they dare not despise the same; yet we may see also in what deadly grins [gins] Satan insnareth all those which have not the Spirit of Christ, that they do not only fear to provide for themselves, but purposely avoid those remedies which are offered them unto salvation. They both see and allow those things which are both holy and profitable, and yet, notwithstanding, they are either carried headlong unto things which are worse, or else they wax drowsy in their filthiness.

15. *The shadow of Peter, as he came.* The Papists abuse this text, [as a pretext,] not only to the end they may commend feigned miracles, which they say are done at the graves of martyrs, but also that they may boast of their relics. Why (say they) shall not the grave, or garment,

[1] "Sed quia illis divinum aliquid subolet nostra doctrina," but because our doctrine has somewhat of a divine savour to them.

or the touching of the bones of Peter, have power to heal, as well as his shadow had this power? I answer, we must not by and by think that that is right which Luke saith was done by ignorant men, and those which knew not the pure faith. Yet we have a more certain answer in readiness than this. For the apostles were endued with such power for this cause, because they were ministers of the gospel. Therefore they used this gift, inasmuch as it served to further the credit of the gospel; yea, God did no less show forth his power in their shadow than in their mouth. Those miracles whereof the Papists babble are so unlike to these, that they are rather altogether contrary. For this is the end of their miracles, to lead away the world from Christ unto saints.

17. *And the high priest rose, and all that were with him, that is to say, the sect of the Sadducees, and were filled with zeal,* [or indignation.]
18. *And they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.*
19. *And the angel of the Lord opened the door of the prison in the night season, and bringing them out, said,*
20. *Go, and standing, speak in the temple unto the people all the words of this life.*
21. *When they heard this early in the morning, they entered into the temple and taught. But when the high priest came, and those which were with him, they called a council, and all the whole senate of the children of Israel, and sent into the common prison to fetch them.*
22. *But when the ministers came, they found them not. Therefore they returned and told, saying,*
23. *The prison truly found we shut with all diligence, and the keepers standing at the door; but when the prison was opened, we found none within.*
24. *When the chief priest, and the captain of the temple, and the priests, heard these sayings, they doubted of these things, what this would be.*
25. *Furthermore, a certain man coming told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye had put in prison stand in the temple, teaching the people.*

26. *Then the captain going with the ministers, brought them without violence. For they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.*

17. Luke hath hitherto declared that the Church was wonderfully increased, that it was furnished[1] with divers gifts, that it excelled in miracles; finally, that the kingdom of Christ did flourish there by all means. Now he beginneth to show that the fury of the wicked was kindled with these things, so that they raged sorer afresh.[2] Whence we may gather with what blind fury and rage Satan driveth them forward, when as they are so little terrified with such evident power of God, that they run headlong more boldly, and with greater force, and bend all their force, as it were, to overthrow the very heaven. As this so great blindness is a horrible punishment of Almighty God, so ought it to teach all men to submit themselves betimes to God, lest that they themselves, being taken with the spirit of giddiness, (whilst they run against the hand of God,) be broken in pieces with the same. Nevertheless, let us know that God will so increase his Church with spiritual good things, that yet, notwithstanding, he suffereth the same to be vexed of the wicked. Therefore we must alway be ready for the combat; for our estate at this day is not unlike to theirs. Especially the knowledge of the gifts of God, whereby he testifieth that he is present with us, ought to encourage us, lest the fury and boldness of the wicked do terrify and dismay us. For this is no small comfort, when we know that God is present with us.

Which were with him. He meaneth those which were most familiar, and the nighest linked in friendship with the chief priest, whose counsel he was wont to use, and whom he had, being, as it were, gathered and culled out of the whole order, not for judgment, or discretion, but for the love of his faction; as they did then contend among them-

[1] "Magnifice ornatum," magnificently furnished. [2] "Ut de integro violentius sævirent," so that they anew became more violently enraged.

selves shamelessly, like mortal enemies. Furthermore, Luke saith again, that the Sadducees did bear the greatest swing at that day; to the end we may know that the government was then confused with horrible wasteness;[1] when as such a sect could bear rule. But God suffered the synagogue to be drowned in such extreme reproach, after that he had separated his Church from it, to the end they might have the less excuse, who, despising the gospel, did continue in such a sink of filthiness. In the mean season, what did enforce and drive forward those swine, who were touched with no care of the life to come, save only mere ambition, and desire to keep that lordship and pre-eminence which they had gotten?

They were filled with zeal. I had liefer keep the Greek word still (especially seeing it is common enough otherwise) than to translate it *emulation* (or *indignation;*) for he speaketh generally of the perverse and violent force wherewith hypocrites are carried and inflamed to maintain their superstitions; whereby it appeareth what account God maketh of zeal, and what praise it deserveth, when as it is not governed by reason and wisdom, that is, when it is not led and guided by the Spirit of God. We see at this day those men moved and stirred with devilish fury, who will be counted the most devout of all men, who rage horribly to shed innocent blood. Nevertheless, let us note, that he speaketh not in this place of an unadvised or blind zeal, which was in many of the Jews, as Paul affirmeth, but we understand rather a hot and unbridled violence; for although the wicked be accused of their own consciences, because they wittingly resist godliness, yet do they deceive themselves with a false show of zeal, because it is lawful to prevent new things.[2] So at this day almost in all Popery they boast only of zeal, whereas notwithstanding they are zealous for their belly. But admit we grant that that is true which they pre-

[1] "Totum Ecclesiæ gubernationem horrenda vastitate tunc fuisse confusam," that the whole government of the Church was then confused and lying waste. [2] "Novis rebus," a revolution.

tend, how can this excuse the heat of their cruelty whereunto they are enforced by their blindness? as if this were a chief virtue to grant liberty to their wrath,[1] to be avenged of that which displeaseth them; but this was former in order, to make a difference between good and evil, lest any thing be dissolved[2] unadvisedly.

19. *The angel of the Lord.* The Lord brought the apostles out of prison, not because he would rid them quite out of the hands of their enemies, for he suffered them afterwards to be brought back again, and to be beaten with rods; but he meant to declare, by this miracle, that they were in his hand and tuition, to the end he might maintain the credit of the gospel; partly that the Church might have another confirmation thereby, partly that the wicked might be left without excuse, wherefore we must not hope always, nay, we must not always desire that God will deliver us from death; but we must be content with this one thing, that our life is defended by his hand, so far as is expedient. In that he useth the ministry of an angel, in this he doth according to his common custom; for he testifieth every where in the Scriptures, that the angels are ministers of his goodness towards us. Neither is that a vain speculation, for this is a profitable help for our infirmity, that we know that not only God doth care for us, but also that the heavenly spirits do watch for our safety. Again, this was no small pledge of God's love towards us, that the creatures of all other most noble are appointed to have regard of our safety. The angel openeth the prison in the night, because he would not work the miracle when the wicked might see him, although he would have the same being wrought known by the event itself.

20. *Speak in the temple.* This is the end of their deliver-

[1] "Frena iracundiæ suæ laxare," to give loose reins to their wrath.

[2] "Atqui hoc ordine prius erat, habere boni et mali discrimen, ne temere quicquam improbetur," but the first thing in order was to observe the distinction between good and evil, that nothing might be rashly disapproved.

ance, that they employ themselves stoutly in preaching the gospel, and provoke their enemies courageously, until they die valiantly. For they were put to death at length when the hand of God ceased, after that they had finished their course; but now the Lord openeth the prison for them, that they may be at liberty to fulfil their function. That is worth the marking, because we see many men, who, after they have escaped out of persecution, do afterwards keep silence, as if they had done their duty towards God, (and were no more to be troubled;) other some, also, do escape away by denying Christ; but the Lord doth deliver his children, not to the end they may cease off from the course which they have begun, but rather that they may be the more zealous afterward. The apostles might have objected, It is better to keep silence for a time, forasmuch as we cannot speak one word without danger; we are now apprehended for one only sermon, how much more shall the fury of our enemies be inflamed hereafter, if they shall see us make no end of speaking? But because they knew that they were to live and to die to the Lord, they do not refuse to do that which the Lord commanded; so we must always mark what function the Lord enjoineth us. There will many things meet us oftentimes, which may discourage us, unless being content with the commandment of God alone, we do our duty, committing the success to him.

The words of this life. A singular commendation of the gospel, that it is a lively doctrine, bringing salvation unto men; for the righteousness of God is revealed unto us in it, (Rom. i. 17;) and in it Christ offereth himself unto us with the sacrifice of his death, with the Spirit of regeneration, with the earnest of our adoption. And this is spoken expressly to the apostles, to the end they may the more courageously enter all manner of combats for the gospel, forasmuch as they hear that they are ministers of eternal salvation. The demonstrative is added for the more certainty, as if the angel did point out life with his finger, as assuredly we need not to seek the same far, when we have the word in our mouth and in our heart; unless peradventure some man had rather take it by

hypallage, the words of this life, for these words, which I do not reject, yet that former sense me thinks is better, for it was a new revelation of Christ wherein they had life present.

21. *And when the chief priest came.* The chief priest calleth all the council together now, lest, if giving the honour to his own sect, he omit others, and be not able to bear the burden; therefore, he is enforced by fear to call the multitude together, notwithstanding they observe diligently and straitly the form of law. The elders are called who did govern, that nothing may be done but according to the sentence and authority of the council. Who would not have hoped for a moderate end, seeing they began thus? and surely they pretend what colour they can, lest they seem to oppress the truth violently and tyrannously; but when they hear that the apostles teach in the temple, howsoever they know that they came not out by deceit of man, but miraculously, yet they hold on still in their purpose; where appeareth, together with the ungodliness of behaviour and contempt of God, horrible fury and want of reason. Therefore, the beautiful colours of right and equity[1] do never so cover hypocrites, but that they do at length betray their wickedness. They must need certainly gather by all circumstances, that it is the work of God that the prison was opened, yet they do not doubt openly to rage against God.

These things are also meet for our time. We know how proudly the Papists boast of that maxim of theirs, that lawful councils must be obeyed, because they represent the Church. Moreover, they call those lawful councils, and they will have them so accounted, wherein nothing is wanting touching the external form, and such a council was this whereof Luke speaketh in this place; and yet, notwithstanding, we know that it was gathered to put out[2] the name of Christ; for although the priests did then creep in unto honour by subtlety, or by inordinate suit,[3] to win the favour of men, or by other wicked policies, or whether they

[1] "Speciosi juris prætextus," the specious pretexts of law. [2] "Extinguendum," to extinguish. [3] "Ambitu," by intrigue.

burst in unto the same by bribery, or murder,[1] yet the dignity of the priesthood did continue as yet until Christ was revealed. There was in the assembly of the elders a representing of the Church; but where the truth of God is not sought, all outward appearance is nothing else but a mere visor. Therefore, it is in vain for the Papists to cover their abominations with the shadow of this buckler, because it is not sufficient for those to be gathered together who are rulers of the Church, unless they do this in the name of Christ, otherwise forasmuch as it is an usual policy of Satan to transform himself into an angel of light, (2 Cor. xi. 14,) we will grant him as fit a covert under the title of the Church as he can wish.

He brought them without violence. We have spoken somewhat before of the captain of the temple. For I do not think[2] that it was lawful for the Jews to set and appoint whom they would to rule the temple, but that the president of the province did appoint one to have the government of the temple. And he saith, that they were brought without violence, that is, that they were not drawn violently, lest any tumult should arise, so that, whereas they neither fear nor reverence God, they are afraid of men. The apostles also do show their modesty in that, that whereas they are guided with a great number of men, yet do they suffer themselves to be led away by the officers, lest they should be authors of any tumult.

27. *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council; and the chief priest asked them,*

28. *Saying, Did not we, in commanding, command you, that you should not teach in this name? And behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and you will bring the blood of this man upon us.*

28. The chief priest layeth two crimes to the charge of the apostles, for he accuseth them of contumacy or stubbornness,[3] because they obeyed not the decree of the council.

[1] "Mutuis cædibus," mutual slaughter.

[2] "Neque enim mihi probabile est," for it does not seem to me probable.

[3] "Inobedientiæ et contumaciæ," of contumacy and disobedience.

In the second member he betrayeth an evil conscience, or, at least, he showeth that he handled rather a private business than any public cause, for he complaineth that the apostles will cause the priests and the scribes to be hated for the death of Christ. Behold, therefore, what that is which nettleth them, because they fear the revenge and punishment of wicked murder. He pretendeth, at the first, doctrine; but we may gather out of the end that he was not so careful for doctrine. In the mean season, he accuseth the apostles of sedition; for he taketh that for a thing which all men, for the most part, did grant,[1] that Christ was put to death justly. Notwithstanding this is the principal point of the accusation, that they did not obey the commandment of the priests. It was an heinous offence not to obey the chief priest; how much more heinous was it, then, to despise the whole order? But the chief priest doth not consider what is his duty towards God and the Church;[2] he abuseth his authority tyrannously, as if the same were not under any laws, as the Pope dealeth with us at this day; for seeing that he taketh to himself an unbridled authority and government, he feareth not to condemn us for schismatics, so soon as he seeth us refuse his decrees; for he catcheth at these sentences: "He which despiseth you despiseth me," (Luke x. 16;) and thereupon he concludeth that we will rebel[3] against God. But if he will be heard as the ambassador of Christ, he must speak out of the mouth of Christ.

Now, forasmuch as he doth manifestly play the minister of Satan, he borroweth authority, without shame and colour, of the name of Christ; yea, the very form of speech which the chief priest useth doth prove how carelessly spiritual tyrants who usurp such authority and lordship as is not subject to the word of God, dare grant liberty to themselves to attempt whatsoever pleaseth them. With a commandment (saith he) have we commanded. Whence cometh such strait rigour, save only because they think that

[1] "Pro confesso sumit," he takes it for granted. [2] "Vicissim," in his turn, is omitted in the translation. [3] "Esse rebelles," are rebels.

all that must be received without exception which they shall command?

29. *And Peter and the apostles answering, said, We ought rather to obey God than men.*

30. *The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him upon a tree.*

31. *Him God hath lifted up with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.*

32. *And we are his witnesses of these words* [or things,] *and the Holy Ghost also, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*

33. *And when they heard these things, they were cut in sunder, and would slay them.*

29. This is the sum of their answer, It is lawful for them, nay, they ought to prefer God before men. God commandeth us to bear witness of Christ; therefore it is in vain for you to command us to keep silence. But I have declared before, in the third chapter, when this sentence taketh place, that we ought rather to obey God than men. God doth set men over us in such sort with power, that he keepeth still his own authority safe and sound. Therefore, we must obey rulers so far, that the commandment of God be not broken. Whereas power and authority is lawfully used, then it is out of season to make comparison between God and man. If a faithful pastor do command or forbid out of the Word of God, it shall be in vain for men which are stubborn to object that we ought to obey God; for God will be heard by man. Yea, man is nothing else but an instrument of God. If a magistrate do his duty as he ought, a man shall in vain say that he is contrary to God, seeing that he dissenteth in nothing; yea, rather the contrary rule is then in force. We must obey God's ministers and officers if we will obey him.[1] But so soon as rulers do lead us away from the obedience

[1] "Eadem in parentibus et dominis ratio," the same holds in parents and masters, omitted in the translation.

were so ordered, that there shined there a certain divine majesty; for they did no less differ from the other than angels from men.

For there is a certain secret majesty in holy discipline and in sincere godliness, which doth even fast bind the wicked whether they will or no. But we know not at this day of what sort the same is; yea, rather, we cause ourselves to be despised together with the gospel, through our profane liberty of evil living. Furthermore, the punishment of Ananias and his wife did not a little terrify the wicked, and keep them from breaking in unadvisedly into the company of those men, where God had showed himself so sharp a Judge. Yet we must note that he speaketh of men which were indifferent in this place, and of those which were not of the worst sort; for there were at that time many at Jerusalem, whom neither the reverence of signs, neither yet of the angelic holiness of the godly, could move. Therefore Luke meaneth moderate men, in whom there are some seed of the fear of God; like as we see at this day certain, whom the vanity of the world keepeth back from submitting their necks unto the yoke of Christ; yet because they smell out some divine thing in our doctrine,[1] they dare not despise the same; yet we may see also in what deadly grins [gins] Satan insnareth all those which have not the Spirit of Christ, that they do not only fear to provide for themselves, but purposely avoid those remedies which are offered them unto salvation. They both see and allow those things which are both holy and profitable, and yet, notwithstanding, they are either carried headlong unto things which are worse, or else they wax drowsy in their filthiness.

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[1] "Sed quia illis divinum aliquid subolet nostra doctrina," but because our doctrine has somewhat of a divine savour to them.

or the touching of the bones of Peter, have power to heal, as well as his shadow had this power? I answer, we must not by and by think that that is right which Luke saith was done by ignorant men, and those which knew not the pure faith. Yet we have a more certain answer in readiness than this. For the apostles were endued with such power for this cause, because they were ministers of the gospel. Therefore they used this gift, inasmuch as it served to further the credit of the gospel; yea, God did no less show forth his power in their shadow than in their mouth. Those miracles whereof the Papists babble are so unlike to these, that they are rather altogether contrary. For this is the end of their miracles, to lead away the world from Christ unto saints.

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19. *And the angel of the Lord opened the door of the prison in the night season, and bringing them out, said,*
20. *Go, and standing, speak in the temple unto the people all the words of this life.*
21. *When they heard this early in the morning, they entered into the temple and taught. But when the high priest came, and those which were with him, they called a council, and all the whole senate of the children of Israel, and sent into the common prison to fetch them.*
22. *But when the ministers came, they found them not. Therefore they returned and told, saying,*
23. *The prison truly found we shut with all diligence, and the keepers standing at the door; but when the prison was opened, we found none within.*
24. *When the chief priest, and the captain of the temple, and the priests, heard these sayings, they doubted of these things, what this would be.*
25. *Furthermore, a certain man coming told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye had put in prison stand in the temple, teaching the people.*

26. *Then the captain going with the ministers, brought them without violence. For they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.*

17. Luke hath hitherto declared that the Church was wonderfully increased, that it was furnished[1] with divers gifts, that it excelled in miracles; finally, that the kingdom of Christ did flourish there by all means. Now he beginneth to show that the fury of the wicked was kindled with these things, so that they raged sorer afresh.[2] Whence we may gather with what blind fury and rage Satan driveth them forward, when as they are so little terrified with such evident power of God, that they run headlong more boldly, and with greater force, and bend all their force, as it were, to overthrow the very heaven. As this so great blindness is a horrible punishment of Almighty God, so ought it to teach all men to submit themselves betimes to God, lest that they themselves, being taken with the spirit of giddiness, (whilst they run against the hand of God,) be broken in pieces with the same. Nevertheless, let us know that God will so increase his Church with spiritual good things, that yet, notwithstanding, he suffereth the same to be vexed of the wicked. Therefore we must alway be ready for the combat; for our estate at this day is not unlike to theirs. Especially the knowledge of the gifts of God, whereby he testifieth that he is present with us, ought to encourage us, lest the fury and boldness of the wicked do terrify and dismay us. For this is no small comfort, when we know that God is present with us.

Which were with him. He meaneth those which were most familiar, and the nighest linked in friendship with the chief priest, whose counsel he was wont to use, and whom he had, being, as it were, gathered and culled out of the whole order, not for judgment, or discretion, but for the love of his faction; as they did then contend among them-

1 "Magnifice ornatum," magnificently furnished. 2 "Ut de integro violentius sæviret," so that they anew became more violently enraged.

selves shamelessly, like mortal enemies. Furthermore, Luke saith again, that the Sadducees did bear the greatest swing at that day; to the end we may know that the government was then confused with horrible wasteness;[1] when as such a sect could bear rule. But God suffered the synagogue to be drowned in such extreme reproach, after that he had separated his Church from it, to the end they might have the less excuse, who, despising the gospel, did continue in such a sink of filthiness. In the mean season, what did enforce and drive forward those swine, who were touched with no care of the life to come, save only mere ambition, and desire to keep that lordship and pre-eminence which they had gotten?

They were filled with zeal. I had liefer keep the Greek word still (especially seeing it is common enough otherwise) than to translate it *emulation* (or *indignation;*) for he speaketh generally of the perverse and violent force wherewith hypocrites are carried and inflamed to maintain their superstitions; whereby it appeareth what account God maketh of zeal, and what praise it deserveth, when as it is not governed by reason and wisdom, that is, when it is not led and guided by the Spirit of God. We see at this day those men moved and stirred with devilish fury, who will be counted the most devout of all men, who rage horribly to shed innocent blood. Nevertheless, let us note, that he speaketh not in this place of an unadvised or blind zeal, which was in many of the Jews, as Paul affirmeth, but we understand rather a hot and unbridled violence; for although the wicked be accused of their own consciences, because they wittingly resist godliness, yet do they deceive themselves with a false show of zeal, because it is lawful to prevent new things.[2] So at this day almost in all Popery they boast only of zeal, whereas notwithstanding they are zealous for their belly. But admit we grant that that is true which they pre-

[1] "Totum Ecclesiæ gubernationem horrenda vastitate tunc fuisse confusam," that the whole government of the Church was then confused and lying waste. [2] "Novis rebus," a revolution.

tend, how can this excuse the heat of their cruelty whereunto they are enforced by their blindness? as if this were a chief virtue to grant liberty to their wrath,[1] to be avenged of that which displeaseth them; but this was former in order, to make a difference between good and evil, lest any thing be dissolved[2] unadvisedly.

19. *The angel of the Lord.* The Lord brought the apostles out of prison, not because he would rid them quite out of the hands of their enemies, for he suffered them afterwards to be brought back again, and to be beaten with rods; but he meant to declare, by this miracle, that they were in his hand and tuition, to the end he might maintain the credit of the gospel; partly that the Church might have another confirmation thereby, partly that the wicked might be left without excuse, wherefore we must not hope always, nay, we must not always desire that God will deliver us from death; but we must be content with this one thing, that our life is defended by his hand, so far as is expedient. In that he useth the ministry of an angel, in this he doth according to his common custom; for he testifieth every where in the Scriptures, that the angels are ministers of his goodness towards us. Neither is that a vain speculation, for this is a profitable help for our infirmity, that we know that not only God doth care for us, but also that the heavenly spirits do watch for our safety. Again, this was no small pledge of God's love towards us, that the creatures of all other most noble are appointed to have regard of our safety. The angel openeth the prison in the night, because he would not work the miracle when the wicked might see him, although he would have the same being wrought known by the event itself.

20. *Speak in the temple.* This is the end of their deliver-

[1] "Frena iracundiæ suæ laxare," to give loose reins to their wrath.

[2] "Atqui hoc ordine prius erat, habere boni et mali discrimen, ne temere quicquam improbetur," but the first thing in order was to observe the distinction between good and evil, that nothing might be rashly disapproved.

ance, that they employ themselves stoutly in preaching the gospel, and provoke their enemies courageously, until they die valiantly. For they were put to death at length when the hand of God ceased, after that they had finished their course; but now the Lord openeth the prison for them, that they may be at liberty to fulfil their function. That is worth the marking, because we see many men, who, after they have escaped out of persecution, do afterwards keep silence, as if they had done their duty towards God, (and were no more to be troubled;) other some, also, do escape away by denying Christ; but the Lord doth deliver his children, not to the end they may cease off from the course which they have begun, but rather that they may be the more zealous afterward. The apostles might have objected, It is better to keep silence for a time, forasmuch as we cannot speak one word without danger; we are now apprehended for one only sermon, how much more shall the fury of our enemies be inflamed hereafter, if they shall see us make no end of speaking? But because they knew that they were to live and to die to the Lord, they do not refuse to do that which the Lord commanded; so we must always mark what function the Lord enjoineth us. There will many things meet us oftentimes, which may discourage us, unless being content with the commandment of God alone, we do our duty, committing the success to him.

The words of this life. A singular commendation of the gospel, that it is a lively doctrine, bringing salvation unto men; for the righteousness of God is revealed unto us in it, (Rom. i. 17;) and in it Christ offereth himself unto us with the sacrifice of his death, with the Spirit of regeneration, with the earnest of our adoption. And this is spoken expressly to the apostles, to the end they may the more courageously enter all manner of combats for the gospel, forasmuch as they hear that they are ministers of eternal salvation. The demonstrative is added for the more certainty, as if the angel did point out life with his finger, as assuredly we need not to seek the same far, when we have the word in our mouth and in our heart; unless peradventure some man had rather take it by

hypallage, the words of this life, for these words, which I do not reject, yet that former sense me thinks is better, for it was a new revelation of Christ wherein they had life present.

21. *And when the chief priest came.* The chief priest calleth all the council together now, lest, if giving the honour to his own sect, he omit others, and be not able to bear the burden; therefore, he is enforced by fear to call the multitude together, notwithstanding they observe diligently and straitly the form of law. The elders are called who did govern, that nothing may be done but according to the sentence and authority of the council. Who would not have hoped for a moderate end, seeing they began thus? and surely they pretend what colour they can, lest they seem to oppress the truth violently and tyrannously; but when they hear that the apostles teach in the temple, howsoever they know that they came not out by deceit of man, but miraculously, yet they hold on still in their purpose; where appeareth, together with the ungodliness of behaviour and contempt of God, horrible fury and want of reason. Therefore, the beautiful colours of right and equity[1] do never so cover hypocrites, but that they do at length betray their wickedness. They must need certainly gather by all circumstances, that it is the work of God that the prison was opened, yet they do not doubt openly to rage against God.

These things are also meet for our time. We know how proudly the Papists boast of that maxim of theirs, that lawful councils must be obeyed, because they represent the Church. Moreover, they call those lawful councils, and they will have them so accounted, wherein nothing is wanting touching the external form, and such a council was this whereof Luke speaketh in this place; and yet, notwithstanding, we know that it was gathered to put out[2] the name of Christ; for although the priests did then creep in unto honour by subtlety, or by inordinate suit,[3] to win the favour of men, or by other wicked policies, or whether they

[1] "Speciosi juris prætextus," the specious pretexts of law. [2] "Extinguendum," to extinguish. [3] "Ambitu," by intrigue.

burst in unto the same by bribery, or murder,[1] yet the dignity of the priesthood did continue as yet until Christ was revealed. There was in the assembly of the elders a representing of the Church; but where the truth of God is not sought, all outward appearance is nothing else but a mere visor. Therefore, it is in vain for the Papists to cover their abominations with the shadow of this buckler, because it is not sufficient for those to be gathered together who are rulers of the Church, unless they do this in the name of Christ, otherwise forasmuch as it is an usual policy of Satan to transform himself into an angel of light, (2 Cor. xi. 14,) we will grant him as fit a covert under the title of the Church as he can wish.

He brought them without violence. We have spoken somewhat before of the captain of the temple. For I do not think[2] that it was lawful for the Jews to set and appoint whom they would to rule the temple, but that the president of the province did appoint one to have the government of the temple. And he saith, that they were brought without violence, that is, that they were not drawn violently, lest any tumult should arise, so that, whereas they neither fear nor reverence God, they are afraid of men. The apostles also do show their modesty in that, that whereas they are guided with a great number of men, yet do they suffer themselves to be led away by the officers, lest they should be authors of any tumult.

27. *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council; and the chief priest asked them,*

28. *Saying, Did not we, in commanding, command you, that you should not teach in this name? And behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and you will bring the blood of this man upon us.*

28. The chief priest layeth two crimes to the charge of the apostles, for he accuseth them of contumacy or stubbornness,[3] because they obeyed not the decree of the council.

[1] "Mutuis cædibus," mutual slaughter.

[2] "Neque enim mihi probabile est," for it does not seem to me probable.

[3] "Inobedientiæ et contumaciæ," of contumacy and disobedience.

In the second member he betrayeth an evil conscience, or, at least, he showeth that he handled rather a private business than any public cause, for he complaineth that the apostles will cause the priests and the scribes to be hated for the death of Christ. Behold, therefore, what that is which nettleth them, because they fear the revenge and punishment of wicked murder. He pretendeth, at the first, doctrine; but we may gather out of the end that he was not so careful for doctrine. In the mean season, he accuseth the apostles of sedition; for he taketh that for a thing which all men, for the most part, did grant,[1] that Christ was put to death justly. Notwithstanding this is the principal point of the accusation, that they did not obey the commandment of the priests. It was an heinous offence not to obey the chief priest; how much more heinous was it, then, to despise the whole order? But the chief priest doth not consider what is his duty towards God and the Church;[2] he abuseth his authority tyrannously, as if the same were not under any laws, as the Pope dealeth with us at this day; for seeing that he taketh to himself an unbridled authority and government, he feareth not to condemn us for schismatics, so soon as he seeth us refuse his decrees; for he catcheth at these sentences: "He which despiseth you despiseth me," (Luke x. 16;) and thereupon he concludeth that we will rebel[3] against God. But if he will be heard as the ambassador of Christ, he must speak out of the mouth of Christ.

Now, forasmuch as he doth manifestly play the minister of Satan, he borroweth authority, without shame and colour, of the name of Christ; yea, the very form of speech which the chief priest useth doth prove how carelessly spiritual tyrants who usurp such authority and lordship as is not subject to the word of God, dare grant liberty to themselves to attempt whatsoever pleaseth them. With a commandment (saith he) have we commanded. Whence cometh such strait rigour, save only because they think that

[1] "Pro confesso sumit," he takes it for granted. [2] "Vicissim," in his turn, is omitted in the translation. [3] "Esse rebelles," are rebels.

all that must be received without exception which they shall command?

29. *And Peter and the apostles answering, said, We ought rather to obey God than men.*
30. *The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him upon a tree.*
31. *Him God hath lifted up with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.*
32. *And we are his witnesses of these words* [or things,] *and the Holy Ghost also, whom God hath given to them that obey him.*
33. *And when they heard these things, they were cut in sunder, and would slay them.*

29. This is the sum of their answer, It is lawful for them, nay, they ought to prefer God before men. God commandeth us to bear witness of Christ; therefore it is in vain for you to command us to keep silence. But I have declared before, in the third chapter, when this sentence taketh place, that we ought rather to obey God than men. God doth set men over us in such sort with power, that he keepeth still his own authority safe and sound. Therefore, we must obey rulers so far, that the commandment of God be not broken. Whereas power and authority is lawfully used, then it is out of season to make comparison between God and man. If a faithful pastor do command or forbid out of the Word of God, it shall be in vain for men which are stubborn to object that we ought to obey God; for God will be heard by man. Yea, man is nothing else but an instrument of God. If a magistrate do his duty as he ought, a man shall in vain say that he is contrary to God, seeing that he dissenteth in nothing; yea, rather the contrary rule is then in force. We must obey God's ministers and officers if we will obey him.[1] But so soon as rulers do lead us away from the obedience

[1] "Eadem in parentibus et dominis ratio," the same holds in parents and masters, omitted in the translation.

of God, because they strive against God with sacrilegious boldness, their pride must be abated, that God may be above all in authority. Then all smokes of honour vanish away. For God doth not vouchsafe to bestow honourable titles upon men, to the end they may darken his glory. Therefore, if a father, being not content with his own estate, do essay to take from God the chief honour of a father, he is nothing else but a man. If a king, or ruler, or magistrate, do become so lofty that he diminisheth the honour and authority of God, he is but a man. We must thus think also of pastors. For he which goeth beyond his bounds in his office, (because he setteth himself against God,) must be despoiled of his honour, lest, under a colour or visor, he deceive. The office of a pastor is very excellent, the authority of the Church is great, yet so that no part of God's power and Christ's mastership be diminished. Whence we may easily gather that the pride of the Pope is ridiculous, who, when as he treadeth under foot the whole kingdom of Christ, and doth set himself openly against God, will yet, nevertheless, lie hid under the name of Christ.[1]

30. *The God of our fathers.* They descend unto the matter whereof they are to speak, that they may declare that they made small account of the commandment of the priests, not without cause, nor yet unadvisedly. For (as I have already said) the comparison between God and man taketh no place save only when there is some contrariety. Therefore they prove by this, that they are enforced by the fear of God to refuse the commandment of the priests; because God commandeth that which they forbid. Therefore, first of all, they say that God had raised up Christ, after the common custom of the Scriptures. For this speech is common, that God raised up prophets or judges, or rather ministers, whom he determined to use into some great work; which importeth as much as that all excel-

[1] "Dei," of God.

lency of nature is weak, unless God do furnish those with singular gifts whom he preferreth unto any excellent office. Peradventure, also, they allude unto that famous place of Moses, which Peter cited in his first sermon, (Deut. xviii. 15, above iii. 22.) They cite the *God of the fathers* by name, as the author, that they may declare that they bring in no new form of religion, neither yet will they enforce upon the people any new god. For they were to make answer to that false slander, that they went about to lead away the people from the law and the prophets. Not that they allow all that worship which was used by the fathers, as profane men are content with this only argument, that the fathers taught thus, that they do all things according to the custom and decree of their ancestors; but the apostles speak in this place of those fathers with whom God hath made his covenant, who followeth right and pure doctrine, who embraceth the promise of salvation with true faith; finally, who had their beginning of the heavenly Father, and who, through the only begotten Son of God, were the children of God together with their posterity.

Whom ye. In this member the apostles declare unto them plainly that they were the enemies of God who would have the chief honour given them as unto the governors and prelates of the Church. Whereupon it followeth that they are unworthy even of the smallest authority. Although there is also a prevention, being a token of boldness, when as he speaketh of that thing boldly and freely which they did account a shameful thing, to wit, lest any part of Christ's glory should seem to be diminished because he suffered a slanderous[1] death upon the cross; as if it had been said, You have slain him. Neither was your cruelty satisfied with a plain and common death; for he was hanged upon a tree. But neither could death extinguish his power; neither could that shame and reproach which he suffered amongst you take away his honour. Therefore the calling of God continueth firm and stable. Therefore, as the apostles

[1] "Ignominosam," ignominious.

hit the priests in the teeth with that wickedness and heinous offence which they had committed, so they prevent, by a granting, to express the manner of the reproachful death which Christ suffered, lest the authors of the wickedness triumph as having gotten the victory.

31. *Him hath God lifted up.* Therefore the apostles do signify that whatsoever the wicked do go about, it did not hinder and keep back Christ from fulfilling his function which was enjoined him by his Father. The *right hand of God* is taken for his power. Neither is the same metaphor used in this place, which we had before, chapter ii., and which is common elsewhere, when Christ is said to be lift up unto the right hand of the Father; but the meaning of this place is, that Christ, which was slain by the hand of men, was lifted up on high by the power of God, that he might bear rule over angels and men. And this seemeth secretly to be set against all the enterprises of Satan and the world; as if he should say that they shall have no good success, because they shall never climb so high as to hinder the hand of God, whereby he hath both wrought mightily already in his only begotten Son, neither will he ever cease to work. Yet the end is added also, that he may be a captain and Saviour. For so often as God did put his people in hope of salvation, he was wont to promise a prince or a king, by whose hand he would restore all things. The apostles do testify that this principality was granted to Christ. Notwithstanding they do more plainly express his office by the other adjunct.[1] The sum is this, that Christ is placed in the highest degree of honour, that he may govern the people of God, and not that only, but that he may show himself to be a saving captain, or the author of salvation.

To give repentance. They show in this place how Christ reigneth to save the people, to wit, when he bringeth his own to repentance, and doth reconcile them unto God

[1] "Epitheto," epithet.

through the remission of sins. Furthermore, we know that the sum of the gospel is contained in these two things. Wherefore the apostles do not only stand upon the defence of their cause, but they preach the office of Christ plentifully,[1] that they may win even some of the mortal enemies of Christ,[2] if it may be. Furthermore, we have declared before what the word *repentance* doth signify, to wit, that it is an inward turning of man unto God, which showeth itself afterwards by external works. For Christ giveth us the Spirit of regeneration for this cause, that he may renew us inwardly; to the end that a new life may afterward follow the newness of the mind and heart. And if it belong to Christ to give repentance, then it followeth that it is not a thing which is in man's power. And surely, seeing that it is a certain wonderful reformation, (or fashioning again,) which maketh us new creatures, repaireth in us the image of God, bringeth us out of the bondage of sin unto the obedience of righteousness; it is a thing as impossible for men to convert themselves as to create themselves. Repentance is, I grant, a voluntary conversion, but whence have we this will, save only because God changeth our heart, that it may be made fleshy of a stony heart; flexible, of hard and stubborn; and, finally, righteous of wicked, (Ezek. xi. 19.) And this cometh to pass when Christ regenerateth thus by his Spirit. Neither is this given in a moment, but it must be increased daily during our whole life, until we be fully joined to God; which shall be then when we have put off our flesh.

This is, indeed, the beginning of repentance, when a man, who before was turned away from God, renounceth the world and himself, and doth purpose to lead a new life. But because when we have entered the way, we are far from the mark, we must needs go forward continually. We have[3] both through the benefit of Christ. For as he beginneth repentance in us, so doth he also give us perse-

[1] "Luculenter," clearly. [2] "Pietatis," of piety. [3] "Consequimur," obtain.

verance. This is an inestimable grace; but it should do us but a little good, unless it were coupled with forgiveness of sins. For Christ doth both find us the enemies of God at the first, and also there are always vices remaining in us, which cause disagreement between him and us; so that he may justly be offended with us, rather than merciful unto us. And therein doth our righteousness consist, if God do not impute our sins unto us. Therefore, this latter grace must never be separated from them. Yea, rather the gospel shall be lame [1] and corrupt, unless it consist upon [of] these two members, that is, unless men be taught that they are reconciled to God by Christ by the free imputation of righteousness, and that they are fashioned again unto newness of life by the Spirit of regeneration. So that we understand briefly how we must obtain salvation in Christ.

32. *And we are his witnesses.* After that they have declared that their doctrine came from God, they descend now unto the other part, that they speak as they were commanded by God, lest they seem to attempt anything unadvisedly. For this also was a necessary defence, as it is for all the ministers of the gospel, to wit, that they make this openly known to all men that they teach nothing but that which they have received of God. Secondly, that they are called hereunto, so that they cannot avoid the necessity of teaching, unless they will resist God. Luke putteth *words* in this place, instead of *things*, according to the Hebrew phrase. Although if any man had rather understand it of the speech itself, I do not deny but that it may be so. The sum is, seeing they are brought forth by God to be witnesses, they may not give back,[2] but they must publish things which he hath commanded.

And also the Spirit. They confirm their calling by the effect; for this was a seal to approve their doctrine, seeing

[1] "Mutilum," mutilated. [2] "Tergiversari," turn their back, backslide.

that God gave the Holy Spirit to those which believed. Forasmuch as it appeared manifestly by this, that he allowed the faith of the gospel, and it was acceptable to him. In that they say *to those which obey him*, I refer it unto Christ, as if they should have said, those which believe in Christ are plentifully rewarded for their obedience. Therefore God will have Christ obeyed. Wherefore even our ministry doth please him in that thing. Yet here may a question be moved, Seeing that we have faith by the revelation of the Spirit, how is it said in this place, that the same is given after faith? I answer, that the gift of tongues, of prophecy, of interpretation, of healing, and such like, are spoken of in this place, wherewith God did beautify his Church. As Paul saith, where he asketh the Galatians, whether they received the Spirit by the law, or by the hearing of faith, (Gal. iii. 2.) Therefore the illumination of the Spirit goeth before faith, because it is the cause thereof; but there follow other graces afterward, that we may go forward, according to that, "To him that hath shall be given," (Matth. xiii. 12.) And if we will be enriched every now and then with new gifts of the Spirit, let us hold out unto God the lap of faith.[1] But the reward wherewith our want of faith is rewarded at this day is far unlike;[2] for the most part being destitute of the Spirit of God doth neither see nor understand anything.

33. *They were cut in sunder.* The priests ought to have been thoroughly moved, though they had had hearts of iron, but they burst.[3] Whence we gather that no reasons can prevail with the reprobate, to bring them unto the obedience of Christ; for unless God speak within, the outward doctrine shall be able to do nothing else but to beat the ears. The apostles were able so to overcome their enemies, that they should not have had one word to say;

[1] "Fidei sinum aperiamus Deo," let us open a bosom of faith to God.
[2] "Sed longe diversum præmium hodie reportat nostra incredulitas," but our incredulity in the present day receiveth a very different recompence.
[3] "Sed rumpuntur," but they burst (with rage.)

but their fury was so untamed and unbridled, that they do rather go mad. Yet we must therewithal note the force of the word, because, although the reprobate are not thereby changed, that they may become better, yet it pierceth into their hearts, so that it urgeth their consciences; for thence springeth their fury, because they saw themselves[1] urged by their judge. They would gladly mock all the gospel, as they attempt whatsoever they can, that they may count it as nothing; but there is in the same a certain hidden majesty, which driveth away mightily all their delicacy.[2] And chiefly when they are cited by the sound of the trumpet to appear before the judgment-seat of God, then appeareth their madness and fury.

34. *And a certain Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, precious to all the people, rising in the council, commanded the apostles to be carried out a little space.*

35. *Then he said unto them, Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves, what ye intend to do touching these men.*

36. *For before these days there arose one Theudas, saying, that he was some great man, to whom consented a number of men, about four hundred, who perished; and they were all scattered abroad which had obeyed him, and were brought to nought.*

37. *After him arose one Judas of Galilee, in the days of the tribute, and led away much people after him, and he likewise perished; and all which had obeyed him were scattered abroad.*

38. *Now, therefore, I say unto you, Abstain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it shall come to nought:*

39. *But if it be of God, you cannot destroy it; lest, at any time, ye be found to fight with God.*

34. Luke showeth now after what manner God brought to nought the fury of the wicked. They were purposed to put the apostles to death; Gamaliel standeth up amidst them, to break off that mad consultation. Furthermore,

[1] "Se sentiunt," they feel themselves. [2] "Quæ omnes illorum delicias violenter discutit," which, with a strong hand, dispels all their delights.

he noteth the circumstances, to the end we may know how it could be, that one man could prevail so much against so many. He saith he was a Pharisee, which sect was in great estimation, as we know. He saith that he was in price, or honoured amongst the people; And they feared the people. Hereby it cometh to pass that they are the more afraid to do any thing contrary to his mind. So God doth oftentimes set sudden terrors against his enemies, (when they look not for them,) to stay their violence. Furthermore, Gamaliel commandeth the apostles to go aside, lest they should be the more emboldened by his words. For we must not think that he spake thus, because he did allow[1] the doctrine of the gospel, or that he meant to defend the same; but because he saw all the rest inflamed with fury, he being a man moderate and courteous, doth with sober speech temper that excess.

But if we consider all things well, this judgment and opinion is unmeet for a wise man. I know that many count it as an oracle, but it appeareth sufficiently hereby that they judge amiss, because by this means men should abstain from all punishments, neither were any wicked fact any longer to be corrected. Yea, all helps of life were to be refused, which we cannot prolong one moment.[2] Both things are true, that no endeavour of men can destroy that which is of God; and that that which is of men is not so strong that it can stand. But he gathereth amiss hence, that men must sit still and say nothing in the mean season. We must rather mark what God commandeth us to do, and he will have us to restrain wickedness. To this end hath he appointed magistrates, and armed them with the sword; to this end hath he set elders over his Church, to bring the froward in order, and that they may not suffer sin licentiously to rage without punishment. Therefore it is gathered amiss that we must refrain from punishing, because God is sufficient of himself to take away evils. Although his whole counsel is such, Gamaliel willeth the scribes and elders to take heed that they make not open

[1] "Probaret," he approved. [2] "In arbitrio nostro," at our pleasure.

war against God. And he speaketh as it were touching a doubtful matter; whereby it appeareth that he hath no certainty from the foundation, when as he doubteth in the quality of the cause, neither dare set down whether it be good or evil, but doth only command to defer it for a time, until the cause appear more plainly.

In sum, Gamaliel setteth an evil consequent from true grounds;[1] because he applieth that amiss unto the external office and manner of doing which ought to serve for faith only. On the other side, let this be our logic, That which is of God must needs stand, though all the world say nay; therefore faith must stand without all fear, against all the assaults of Satan and men, seeing faith is under-propped and supported with the eternal truth of God; although heaven fail, our salvation is safe, which hath God to be the author and keeper thereof; because God doth defend the kingdom of Christ, it can never be overthrown with any violence; because the doctrine of the gospel is grounded in God, howsoever men resist or shake the same, yet shall it nevertheless continue firm. Again, although the wicked attempt whatsoever they can, and seek all means[2] to destroy the Church, although they furiously strive against Christ and his Church so much as they are able, yet they shall not prevail, because it is the property of God to bring the counsels of men to nought; and by this means doth he punish their rashness. We see that both members are well applied to faith. But, in the mean season, there is no cause why the servants of Christ should be less diligent in maintaining the truth; why they should suffer the Church to decay through their fault;[3] why they should carelessly wink at their wickedness who endeavour to turn all things topsy-turvy.

36. *There arose one Theudas.* If we credit Josephus, Gamaliel altereth in this place the true course of the his-

[1] "Ex veris principiis perversam consequentiam deducit," deduces a false consequence from true principles. [2] "Nullosque non moveant lapides," and leave not a stone unturned. [3] "Ignavia," sluggishness.

tory. For he reporteth that Judas Gaulanites, who was born in Gamala, at such time as Quirinius, or Cyrenius, was proconsul, did raise a tumult with his adherents, because they would not have their goods taxed;[1] and that Theudas, at such time as Cuspius Fadus was procurator, did boast that he was a prophet of God. And Fadus was sent into Judea by Claudius Cæsar. The former history is recorded in the Eighteenth Book of Antiquities; and the other in the Twentieth. But I think that when Luke saith, *After him was there one Judas*, he meant not to note the course of time, as if he were the latter; but forasmuch as Gamaliel brought in two like examples, he might put the one in place of the other,[2] without having respect of time. Therefore the word *post* is as much as *moreover*, or *besides*.

Furthermore, even these examples wherewith Gamaliel confirmeth his opinion do not sufficiently agree with the present cause. For, because they did not by and by resist Judas, that sedition which he had raised was the occasion of many murders, and at length he was vanquished with hand and weapon. Theudas also had done far more hurt, unless he had been put to flight in time by Cuspius Fadus. But Gamaliel hath respect unto this alone, that men have unlucky success when as they advance themselves unadvisedly; and that cometh to pass by the just judgment of God. But because the priests refuse to hearken when God giveth them good counsel, they are worthy to be made amazed by man with frivolous reasons, wavering hither and thither through foolish perplexity. Furthermore, if we cast the time, we shall find that it was twelve years at least after the death of Christ before the apostles were beaten. For unto the five years which remained of the government of Tiberius, we must add three and a half which Caligula reigned. Fadus was not sent by Claudius into Judea before the second or third year of his reign. Gamaliel rehearsed not the act within a day or two after. Therefore that space

[1] "Ne census ageretur," to prevent a census from being taken.
[2] "Promiscue miscere," mix promiscuously, confound the two.

of time is complete whereof I spake. Wherefore the constancy of the apostles was the more excellent, who, though they be so evil rewarded for those long pains which they had endured, yet are they not discouraged, neither do they cease to hold on as they had begun.

That he was some great man. Some books[1] have, Saying that he was somebody; yet both carry one sense. For he boasted that he was such a prophet that he could dry up Jordan, that those which were with him might go over dry foot. Nevertheless, we see how far Gamaliel is from true knowledge, who compareth the holy ministers of Christ unto seducers and robbers; although he mitigateth his words afterward, and, inclining toward the better part, leaveth it indifferent whether they have taken this matter in hand, having God for their author or no. Yet he speaketh doubtfully, because he provideth[2] only for quietness, all inquiry being set apart. This is only to be allowed[3] in his speech, that he feareth [deterreth] the wicked from wicked boldness, because there is nothing more to be feared than to strive against God.

40. *And they obeyed him. And when they had called the apostles, having beaten them, they commanded them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus; and they let them go.*

41. *Therefore they went rejoicing from the face of the council, because they were counted worthy to suffer reproach for his name.*

42. *And they did not cease daily in the temple, and in every house, to teach and preach Christ Jesus.*

40. *Having beaten them, they commanded.* He saith that Gamaliel's counsel was allowed; yet the apostles are beaten, and forbidden to preach.[4] Hereby we gather how great the rage of the enemies was, who being now pacified, or at least

[1] "Codices," manuscripts.
[2] "Consulit," consulteth.
[3] "Probandum," to be approved.
[4] "Docere," to teach.

mitigated, do yet, notwithstanding, rage immoderately.[1] And it appeareth also what evil success those doubtful counsels have, wherein men alone are respected, and the truth of God set aside. Gamaliel obtaineth thus much, that the lives of the apostles may be saved;[2] but, in the mean season, the Son of God is blasphemed and slandered in their person; the truth of the gospel is buried in eternal silence, so much as in the enemies lieth. God surely doth by this means wonderfully spread abroad his word; yet that counsel ceaseth not to be evil. Which we must note for this cause, because most men at this day do think, that they do not a little obey God, if they save the lives of those men which come in hazard for the doctrine of the gospel, or somewhat appease[3] the enemies who are otherwise bloody. In the mean season, they are not afraid to drive them unto the wicked denial of Christ, the confessing of whom is far more precious in the sight of God than the life of all men. But what could they do, who, casting away all care of godliness, go about to redeem God's favour with the duty of courtesy?[4]

41. *Then they went, rejoicing.* We must not think that the apostles were so senseless but that they felt some shame, and did also lament, when they felt the punishment; for they had not quite put off nature;[5] but when they considered the cause, then joy got the upperhand. So the faithful must be two manner of ways affectioned so often as they suffer persecution for the gospel; they must be touched with the bitterness of punishments,[6] yet so that they overcome this sorrow with spiritual joy. For they should have (changed their mind, and) stricken sail by and by, unless they had been

[1] "Adeo tamen intemperanter se gerunt," yet conduct themselves so intemperately. [2] "Parcatur," may be spared. [3] "Flectant ad lenitatem," incline to lenity. [4] "Humanitatis officio se apud Deum redimere volunt," would purchase the favour of God to themselves by an act of humanity. [5] "Ac dolerent etiam mali sui sensu; neque enim naturam prorsus exuerent," and were not insensible to their suffering; for they did not altogether divest themselves of their natural feelings.

[6] "Malorum," sufferings.

strengthened and encouraged by that joy.[1] And it is not to be doubted, but that even death was sweet and pleasant to Peter on this fashion, which, notwithstanding the Lord doth testify shall be bitter unto him. Let us, therefore, learn that we must wrestle with sorrow and care,[2] that we hold on courageously to suffer the cross, and that we bear the same when it is laid upon us.

That they were counted worthy. This might seem at the first blush absurd, in that Luke placeth honour in reproach;[3] but the disagreement which is between God and the world causeth this, that that which is counted amongst men most reproachful, excelleth in dignity and glory in the sight of God and his angels. We know that the kind of death which Christ suffered was of all other most shameful, and yet did he triumph most nobly upon the cross; so, when we are made like unto him, we may worthily boast that it is a point of singular excellency, that we suffer rebuke in the sight of the world. Thus doth Paul boast of the marks of Christ, (Gal. vi. 17.) For we must here respect the cause which doth associate us unto Christ,[4] who doth not only swallow up the shame of the world with his glory, but doth also turn reproaches, slanders, and mocks of the world, into great honour. Wherefore, it is no marvel that there be so few found which are strong and stout to bear the cross, because we are almost all drowned and overwhelmed with the sense of the flesh; and there is scarce one amongst an hundred which considereth that the reproach of Christ doth far excel all the triumphs of the world, which is the only matter of comfort. Wherefore, we must use the greater diligence in thinking upon this sentence; that we are at this day made partakers[5] of the sufferings of Christ, that we may be partakers of his glory.

[1] "Nam mox retro vela flexissent, nisi novum vigorem dedisset ex gaudio nata alacritas," for they would immediately have altered their sails, (changed their course,) had not the alacrity produced by joy given them new vigour.
[2] "Anxietate," anxiety. [3] "Dedecore," disgrace. [4] "Filio Dei," the Son of God. [5] "Socii et consortes," companions and sharers.

42. *They ceased not.* Constancy did also accompany their joy. For how is it that we are discouraged with persecution, save only because none lifteth up himself unto Christ, that he may in mind lay hold upon the fruit of victory, and so be pricked forward unto patience? But that man which thinketh with himself that he is happy when he suffereth for Christ's sake, shall never faint, though he must suffer hard conflicts. Therefore the apostles are, after a sort, armed with stripes, so that they valiantly make haste unto death. Therefore, woe be to our daintiness, who, having suffered a little persecution, do by and by resign up the light[1] to another, as if we were now old worn soldiers.

CHAPTER VI.

1. *And in those days, when the number of the disciples grew, there arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, because their widows were despised in the daily ministry.*
2. *Therefore, when the twelve had called unto them the multitude of the disciples, they said, It doth not please* [*or it is not good*] *that we should serve tables, having left the word of God.*
3. *Therefore, brethren, look out seven men of you, of known honesty, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, whom we will appoint over this business,*
4. *And we will give ourselves unto prayer, and to the ministration of the word.*
5. *The speech pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost; and Philip, and Prochorus,* [*Nicanor,*] *and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch;*
6. *These did they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.*

[1] "Facem resignamus," resign the torch.

1. Luke declareth here upon what occasion, and to what end, and also with what rite, deacons were first made. He saith, When there arose a murmuring amongst the disciples, it was appeased by this remedy, as it is said in the common proverb, Good laws have taken their beginning of evil manners. And it may seem to be a strange thing, seeing that this is a function so excellent and so necessary in the Church, why it came not into the apostles' minds at the first, (before there was any such occasion ministered,) to appoint deacons, and why the Spirit of God did not give them such counsel which they take now, being, as it were, enforced thereunto. But that which happened was both better then, and is also more profitable for us at this day, to be unto us an example. If the apostles had spoken of choosing deacons before any necessity did require the same, they should not have had the people so ready; they should have seemed to avoid labour and trouble; many would not have offered so liberally into the hands of other men. Therefore, it was requisite that the faithful should be convict [convinced] by experience, that they might choose deacons willingly, whom they saw they could not want; and that through their own fault.

We learn in this history that the Church cannot be so framed by and by, but that there remain somewhat to be amended; neither can so great a building be so finished in one day, that there may not something be added to make the same perfect. Furthermore, we learn that there is no ordinance of God so holy and laudable, which is not either corrupt or made unprofitable through the fault of men. We wonder that things are never so well ordered in the world, but that there is always some evil mixed with the good; but it is the wickedness and corruption of our nature which causeth this. That was, indeed, a godly order, whereof Luke made mention before, when the goods of all men being consecrated to God, were distributed to every man as he had need;[1] when as the apostles, being, as it were, the stewards of God and the poor, had the chief government of

[1] "In commune," in common.

the alms. But shortly after there ariseth a murmuring which troubleth this order. Here appeareth that corruption of men whereof I have spoken, which doth not suffer us to use our good things. We must also mark the subtilty[1] of Satan, who, to the end he may take from us the use of the gifts of God, goeth about this continually, that it may not remain pure and sound; but that, being mixed with other discommodities, it may, first, be suspected, secondly, loathed, and, lastly, quite taken away. But the apostles have taught us, by their example, that we must not yield unto such engines (and policies) of Satan. For they do not think it meet (being offended with the murmuring) to take away that ministry which they know pleaseth God; but rather invent a remedy whereby the offence may be taken away, and that may be retained which is God's. Thus must we do. For what offences soever Satan raise,[2] we must take good heed that he take not from us those ordinances which are otherwise wholesome.

The number increasing. We ought to wish for nothing more than that God would increase his Church, and gather together many[3] on every side unto his people; but the corruption of our nature hindereth us from having any thing happy in all points. For there arise many discommodities also, even of the increasings of the Church. For it is a hard matter to keep many hypocrites from creeping into the multitude, whose wickedness is not by and by discovered, until such time as they have infected some part of the flock with their infection. Moreover, many wicked, froward, and dissolute persons do insinuate themselves under a false colour of repentance. And that I may pass over innumerable things, there is never such agreement amongst many, but that, according to the diversity of their manners, their opinions are also diverse, so that one thing cannot please all alike. This offence causeth many to be desirous to choose a few for a Church; it causeth them to loathe or else to hate

[1] "Artificium," artifice. [2] "Quotidie," daily, omitted.
[3] "Quam plurimos," as many as possible.

a multitude. But no trouble, no irksomeness, ought so much to prevail, but that we must always be desirous to have the Church increased; but that we must study to enlarge the same; but that we must cherish so much as in us lieth unity with the whole body.

A murmuring of the Greeks. Hereby it appeareth that they were not fully regenerate by the Spirit of God, to whom the diversity of nation and country ministereth occasion of disagreement. For in Christ there is neither Jew nor Grecian, (Gal. iii. 28.) Therefore, this indignation smelleth[1] of the flesh and the world. Wherefore we must take good heed that the like fault be not found in us.[2] There is another fault, in that they declare their indignation by murmuring. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether the complaint were true or no. For when Luke saith that the Greeks murmured, because their widows were not honoured, he showeth not what was done in deed, but what they thought was done. And it may be that forasmuch as the apostles did prefer the Jews,[3] because they were better known, the Greeks did think (though falsely) that their widows were despised as strangers. And this seemeth to be more like to be true. Furthermore, the word *ministering* may be expounded two manner of ways, actively or passively. For we know that at the first there were widows chosen unto the ministration.[4] Notwithstanding, I do rather think that the Greeks did complain, because their widows were not so liberally relieved as they wished. So that the ministration shall be that daily distribution which was wont to be made.

2. *The twelve having the multitude called unto them.* It is a point [proof] of patience and meekness that the apostles are no more moved:[5] It is a point of prudence and godly carefulness, in that they prevent the evil which began to

[1] "Resipit," savours. [2] "Nobis obrepat," creep in upon us.
[3] "Judæas," the Jewish widows. [4] "Ad diaconiam," for ministering, as deaconesses. [5] "Quod non magis excandescunt apostoli," that the apostles are not more inflamed or offended.

arise,[1] without deferring the remedy. For after that every dissension and division hath gathered strength, it is a wound hard to be cured. By this assembly it appeareth that the Church was governed by order and reason, so that the apostles had the chiefest authority, and that they did impart their counsels and purposes unto the people.[2] Again, we must note that the faithful, or Christians, are in this place called disciples, in whom that of Isaiah must be fulfilled, "That they were all taught of God." And again, that of Jeremiah, "They shall all know God, from the least to the greatest."

It pleaseth not. It is in Greek ουκ αρεστον. By which word, the Grecians do now express every opinion or decree which is better than another, or which is to be preferred as being better.[3] I do rather think that the apostles declare what is profitable, than simply what they have decreed. But if it be not expedient for them to meddle with this business,[4] they seem [now] to acknowledge some fault in that they ministered hitherto. And surely that is true, that use is the father of wisdom.[5] Wherefore there shall be no absurdity if we shall say, that the apostles desire of the Church to be unburdened of that function, after that they have tried [experienced] that it is not meet for them. But if there were any fault, it ought rather to be ascribed unto necessity than unto them; for they took not this burthen upon them greedily, but seeing there was no other way as yet, they had better burthen themselves out of measure than that the poor should be forslowed.[6] And when as they say that it is not meet that they should be occupied in providing for the poor, their meaning is, that

[1] "Quod mature nascenti malo occurrunt," that they quickly meet the growing evil. [2] "Cum plebe tamen communicarent sua consilia," yet did communicate with the people as to their purposes. [3] "Quo nomine Græci nunc quod aliis præstat, et tanquam melius præferendum est nunc quodvis placitum designant," by which term the Greeks designate sometimes "whatever is better than, or is to be preferred to, other things;" and at others, "any thing whatever that pleases," or "any decree." [4] "Hac cura involvi," to be involved in such business. [5] "Prudentiæ usum esse patrem," that use (or experience) is the parent of prudence. [6] "Negligi," neglected.

they are unable to endure both burthens, so that they must needs let the one alone. For it is as if they should say, If thou wilt enjoy our ministry in the preaching of the gospel, deliver us from the charge of the poor, because we are not able to do both. But this seemeth to be spoken out of season by them, because they had not left the charge of teaching before, although they had the oversight of the alms. I answer, forasmuch as the administration was confused, they were so enwrapped,[1] that they could not wholly attend upon doctrine as was meet. Therefore, they refuse that function which draweth them away from the free and perfect[2] charge of teaching. Notwithstanding, we may not think that they had quite cast away all care of the poor, but that they did only seek somewhat to be lightened and eased, that they might attend upon their office. And, in the mean season, they declare that the ministry of the word is so painful[3] that it requireth a whole man, neither will it suffer him to be occupied about any other business; which, if it had been well considered, there had been a far other order taken in the Church.

The Popish bishops did suck[4] up great riches under colour of the ministration or deaconship; nevertheless, they entangled themselves in divers businesses, which they were scarce able to overcome,[5] though every one of them had had ten heads. Notwithstanding, such is their wickedness, that they say that there can be no church unless it be drowned in this depth;[6] neither do they cease to brag and boast that they are the successors of the apostles, whereas there is nothing which appeareth to be more contrary. They were careful for this, that they might not be occupied about serving of tables, and so be compelled to leave their own banquets. For whosoever is careful for his own table, he taketh leave to be vacant[7] from other men's tables.

[1] "Sic fuisse implicitos," were so encumbered by it. [2] "Solida," entire. [3] "Operosum," laborious. [4] "Ingurgitarunt," ingulf, swallow up. [5] "Quibus vix sufficerent," for which they could hardly suffice. [6] "Abysso," abyss. [7] "Vacationem sibi sumit," keepeth himself free.

But omitting these things, let us mark this sentence. We know what a holy thing it is to be careful for the poor. Therefore, forasmuch as the apostles prefer the preaching of the gospel before it, we gather thereby that no obedience is more acceptable to God. Notwithstanding, the hardness is also declared,[1] when as they say that they cannot discharge both these duties. Surely we are not better than they. Therefore, let every one of us that is called unto the function of teaching addict himself wholly to order this his estate well.[2] For we are inclined to nothing more than to fall to slothfulness. Again, the flesh ministereth goodly cloaks and colours, so that those men cannot see by and by that they are led away from their calling which enwrap themselves in strange business. Wherefore, to the end ministers may prick forward themselves to do their duty, let them remember this saying of the apostles oftentimes, wherein they declare that, forasmuch as they are called unto the function of teaching, they must not any longer take charge of the poor. Therefore, what excuses have profane affairs[3] (taken in hand even for some private gain) where that is set aside, which is otherwise accounted no small part of the worship of God.

3. *Therefore, brethren, look out.* Now we see to what end deacons were made. The word itself is indeed general, yet is it properly taken for those which are stewards for the poor. Whereby it appeareth how licentiously the Papists do mock God and men, who assign unto their deacons no other office but this, to have the charge of[4] the paten and chalice. Surely we need no disputation to prove that they agree in no point with the apostles. But if the readers be desirous to see any more concerning this point, they may repair unto our Institution, chap. viii. As touching this present place, the Church is permitted to

1 "Difficultas monstratur," the difficulty is shown. 2 "Spartæ suæ ornandæ, (ut est in proverbio,") to adorn his own Sparta, (as the proverb expresses it.) 3 "Occupationes," occupations. 4 "Tractent," to handle.

choose. For it is tyrannous if any one man appoint or make ministers at his pleasure.[1] Therefore, this is the (most) lawful way, that those be chosen by common voices[2] who are to take upon them[3] any public function in the Church. And the apostles prescribe what manner [of] persons ought to be chosen, to wit, men of tried honesty and credit,[4] men endued with wisdom[5] and other gifts of the Spirit. And this is the mean between tyranny and confused liberty,[6] that nothing be done without[7] the consent and approbation of the people, yet so that the pastors moderate and govern (this action,[8]) that their authority may be as a bridle to keep under the people,[9] lest they pass their bounds too much. In the mean season, this is worth the noting, that the apostles prescribe an order unto the faithful, lest they appoint any save those which are fit. For we do God no small injury if we take all that come to hand[10] to govern his house. Therefore, we must use great circumspection that we choose none[11] unto the holy function of the Church unless we have some trial of him first. The number of seven is applied[12] unto the present necessity, lest any man should think[13] that there is some mystery comprehended under the same. Whereas Luke saith, *full of the Spirit and wisdom*, I do interpret it thus, that it is requisite that they be furnished both with other gifts of the Spirit, and also with wisdom,[14] without which that function cannot be exercised well, both that they may beware of the legerdemain[15] of those men, who being too much given unto begging, require[16] that which is necessary for the poverty of

1 "Constituat suo arbitrio," constitute at his own pleasure. 2 "Elegi communibus suffragiis," be elected by the common suffrages. 3 "Obiture," are to perform. 4 "Probatæ fidei," of tried faith. 5 "Prudentia," wisdom or prudence. 6 "Licentiam," licentious freedom. 7 "Nisi ex," except by. 8 "Pastores tamen moderentur," let pastors, however, moderate. 9 "Ad cohibendos plebis impetus," to curb the impetus (precipitancy or violence) of the people. 10 "Si fortuito quoslibet accipimus," if we receive all persons whatsoever fortuitously. 11 "Summa religio ne quis sumatur," the greatest care that none be chosen. 12 "Accommodatus fuit," was accommodated. 13 "Ne quis putet," let no man suppose. 14 "Prudentia." 15 "Imposturis et fraudibus," the imposition and fraud. 16 "Exsugunt," suck up.

the brethren, and also of their slanders, who cease not to backbite, though they have none occasion given them. For that function is not only painful, but also subject to many ungodly murmurings.[1]

4. *And we will give ourselves unto prayer.* They show again that they have too much business otherwise, wherein they may exercise themselves during their whole life. For the old proverb agreeth hereunto very fitly, which was used sometimes in the solemn rites, *do this.* Therefore, they use the word προσκαρτερῆσαι, which signifieth to be, as it were, fastened and tied to anything. Therefore, pastors must not think that they have so done their duty that they need to do no more when they have daily spent some time in teaching. There is another manner of study, another manner of zeal, another manner of continuance[2] required, that they may[3] indeed boast that they are wholly given to that thing. They adjoin thereunto prayer, not that they alone ought to pray, (for that is an exercise common to all the godly,) but because they have peculiar causes to pray above all others. There is no man which ought not to be careful for the common salvation of the Church. How much more, then, ought the pastor, who hath that function enjoined him by name to labour carefully [anxiously] for it? So Moses did indeed exhort others unto prayer, but he went before them as the ringleader,[4] (Exod. xvii. 11.) And it is not without cause that Paul doth so often make mention of his prayers, (Rom. i. 10.) Again, we must always remember that, that we shall lose all our labour bestowed upon plowing, sowing, and watering, unless the increase come from heaven, (1 Cor. iii. 7.) Therefore, it shall not suffice to take great pains in teaching, unless we require the blessing at the hands of the Lord, that our labour may

[1] "Non laboriosa modo, sed obnoxia sinistris murmuribus," is not only laborious, but liable to sinister murmurings. [2] "Aliud studium, alius fervor, alia assiduitas exigitur," another kind of zeal, another kind of fervour, another kind of assiduity, is required. [3] "Possint," may be able to. [4] "Antesignanus," as a standard-bearer or leader.

not be in vain and unfruitful. Hereby it appeareth that the exercise of prayer[1] is not in vain commended unto the ministers of the word.

5. *Stephen, full of faith.* Luke doth not, therefore, separate faith from the Spirit, as if it also were not a gift of the Spirit; but by Spirit he meaneth other gifts wherewith Stephen was endued, as zeal, wisdom, uprightness, brotherly love, diligence, integrity of a good conscience; secondly, he expresseth the principal kind. Therefore, he signifieth that Stephen did excel first in faith, and, secondly, in other virtues; so that it was evident that he had abundance of the grace of the Spirit. He doth not so greatly commend the rest, because undoubtedly they were inferior to him. Moreover, the ancient writers do, with great consent, affirm that this Nicholas, which was one of the seven, is the same of whom John maketh mention in the Revelation, (Rev. ii. 15,) to wit, that he was an author of a filthy and wicked sect; forasmuch as he would have women to be common. For which cause we must not be negligent in choosing ministers of the Church. For if the hypocrisy of men do deceive even those which are most vigilant and careful to take heed, what shall befal the careless and negligent? Notwithstanding, if when we have used such circumspection as is meet, it so fall out that we be deceived, let us not be troubled out of measure; forasmuch as Luke saith that even the apostles were subject to this inconvenience. Some will ask this question, then, what good shall exhortation do? to what use serveth prayer, seeing that the success itself showeth that the election was not wholly governed by the Spirit of God? I answer, that this is a great matter that the Spirit directed their judgments in choosing six men; in that he suffereth the Church to go astray in the seventh, it ought to seem no absurd thing. For it is requisite that we be thus humbled divers ways, partly that the wicked and ungodly may exercise us; partly that, being taught by their

[1] "Precandi studium," zeal in prayer.

example, we may learn to examine ourselves thoroughly, lest there be in us any hidden and privy starting-corners of guile;[1] partly that we may be more circumspect to discern, and that we may, as it were, keep watch continually, lest we be deceived by crafty and unfaithful men. Also it may be that the ministry of Nicholas was for a time profitable, and that he fell afterward into that monstrous error. And if so be it he fell in such sort from such an honourable degree, the higher that every one of us shall be extolled, let him submit himself unto God with modesty and fear.

6. *Having prayed, they laid their hands upon them.* Laying on of hands was a solemn sign of consecration under the law. To this end do the apostles now lay their hands upon the deacons, that they may know that they are offered to God. Notwithstanding, because this ceremony should of itself be vain, they add thereunto prayer, wherein the faithful commend unto God those ministers whom they offer unto him. This is referred unto the apostles, for all the people did not lay their hands upon the deacons; but when the apostles did make prayer in the name of the Church, others also did add their petitions. Hence we gather that the laying on of hands is a rite agreeing unto order and comeliness, forasmuch as the apostles did use the same, and yet that it hath of itself no force or power, but that the effect dependeth upon the Spirit of God alone; which is generally to be thought of all ceremonies.

7. *Furthermore, the word of God grew, and the number of the disciples increased greatly at Jerusalem, and a great company of the priests obeyed the faith.*
8. *And Stephen, full of faith and power, wrought wonders and great signs amongst the people.*
9. *But there arose certain of the synagogue, which was called the synagogue of the Libertines and Cyrenians, and of Alexandria, and of those which were of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.*

[1] "Occulti fraudis recessus," hidden recesses of guile.

10. *And they could not resist the wisdom and spirit wherewith he spake.*

Luke setteth forth again the increasing of the Church, to the end he may the better declare the power of God and his grace in the continual going forward thereof. This was an excellent work of God that the Church should suddenly, and, as it were, in a moment, be raised up; but this is worthy no less admiration, in that he furthereth that work which he had begun amidst so many lets, in that the number of these is increased, whom to diminish, and so, consequently, to destroy the whole stock, the world doth so greatly labour. In that he saith that *the Word of God did grow*, his meaning is, that it was spread further abroad. The Word of God is said to grow two manner of ways; either when new disciples are brought to obey the same, or as every one of us profiteth and goeth forward therein. Luke speaketh in this place of the former sort of increasing, for he expoundeth himself by and by, when he speaketh of the number of the disciples. Notwithstanding, he restraineth this so great an increasing of faith unto one city. For although it be to be thought that the disciples were scattered abroad elsewhere, yet was there no certain body save only at Jerusalem.

And a great company. Seeing that (in speaking properly) our faith doth obey the doctrine of the gospel, it is a figurative speech, uttered by *metonymia*, when Luke saith, That they obeyed the faith; for the word *faith* is taken by him for the Word of God, and the very profession of Christianity. And he reckoneth up the priests by name, because they were for the most part enemies; for which cause it was a wonderful work of God that some should be converted, and much more wonderful that many. For at the first they raged against Christ with this brag, "Hath any of the rulers believed in him? But this multitude, which knoweth not the law, are accursed."

8. *And Stephen.* Luke reciteth in this place a new com-

bat of the Church, whereby it appeareth that the glory of the gospel was always joined with the cross and divers troubles. And this is the sum, that the Church was assaulted in the person of one man. Whereby it came to pass that the enemies were the more bold, and being imbrued with innocent blood, did rage sorer than they had wont; for they had not gone as yet beyond the prison and rods. But to the end we may know that the name of Christ was glorified as well in the life as in the death of Stephen, Luke saith at the first, that he was *full of faith and power.* Whereby he signifieth that his faith was excellent, and that he excelled in power to do miracles. Neither ought we to imagine perfection of faith, because he is said to be full of faith; but this manner of speaking is much used in the Scripture, to call those full of the gifts of God who are abundantly endued with the same. I take *power* (without question) for ability to do miracles. *Faith* comprehendeth not only the gift of understanding, but also the ferventness of zeal. Forasmuch as his name was famous by reason of his excellency, it came thereby to pass that the rage of the wicked was bent against him, as it were, with one consent, to overthrow him.[1] For so soon as the force and grace of the Spirit doth show itself, the fury of Satan is by and by provoked.

And it shall appear by the text that Stephen was diligent and courageous in spreading abroad the doctrine of the gospel; but Luke passeth over that, being content to have commended his faith, which could not be slothful and sluggish.

9. *And there arose certain.* This was the beginning of persecution, because the wicked, after that they have essayed in vain to set themselves against Christ by disputing, when they saw that that former attempt did take none effect, they fly unto slanders, (cavilling,) and tumults, and at length they break out into violence and murder. Therefore, Luke

[1] "Uno quasi impetu in eum versa fuerit," was, as it were, with one impulse directed against him.

meaneth by the word *rise*, that those of whom he speaketh did assault the gospel with their tongue, and did not, by and by, bring Stephen before the judgment-seat, but did first set upon him, by disputing against him. Furthermore, he signifieth that they were strangers, which lived in Judea, either that they might exercise merchandise, or else get learning. Therefore he saith that some of them were Cyrenians, some of Alexandria, some of Cilicia, some of Asia. He saith that they were all of the synagogue of the Libertines. It is to be thought that the free men of the citizens of Rome had caused a synagogue to be builded of their own charges, that it might be proper to the Jews which came together out of the provinces.[1]

Therefore, those which were brought thither by the grace of God, and ought to have embraced Christ so much the more willingly, assault him first, and inflame the fury of others, as it were with a trumpet. Also Luke will in many other places afterward declare that the Jews, which were scattered abroad in the provinces, were most deadly enemies to sound doctrine, and most venomous[2] in moving tumults. He reckoneth up many, to the end the victory of the truth may be more famous, whilst that many, gathered of divers countries, depart, being vanquished by one man; and it is not to be doubted but that they were enforced to hold their peace with shame. Stephen had already won great favour, and gotten great dignity by miracles.[3] He answereth the disputers now in such sort that he getteth the upper hand much. He putteth not that *wisdom and spirit*, which he saith his adversaries could not gainstand, as divers things. Therefore resolve these words thus: They could not resist the wisdom which the Spirit of God gave him. For Luke meant to express that they fought not on both sides as men; but that the enemies of the gospel were therefore discouraged and overcome, because they did strive against the Spirit of God, which spake by the

[1] "Quæ peculiaris esset Judæis qui Jerosolymam ex provinciis commeabant," that it might be appropriated to Jews coming to Jerusalem from the provinces. [2] "Virulentos," virulent. [3] "Fides et miracula," faith and miracles.

mouth of Stephen. And forasmuch as Christ hath promised the same Spirit to all his servants, let us only defend the truth faithfully, and let us crave a mouth and wisdom of him, and we shall be sufficiently furnished to speak, so that neither the wit, neither yet the babbling of our adversaries, shall be able to make us ashamed. So the Spirit was as effectual in our time in the mouth of the martyrs which were burnt, and it uttereth the like force now daily, that though they were ignorant men, (never trained up in any schools,) yet did they make the chief divines which maintained Popery no less astonished with their voice only, than if it had thundered and lightned.[1]

11. *Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard this man speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.*
12. *And they moved the people, and the elders, and the scribes. And invading him, they took him and brought him into the council.*
13. *And they brought forth false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law.*
14. *For we have heard him say, That this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the ordinances which Moses hath given us.*
15. *And when all which sat in the council had beholden him, they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.*

12. Being overcome with the power of the Spirit, they give over disputing, but they prepare false witnesses, that, with false and slanderous reports, they may oppress him; whereby it appeareth that they did strive with an evil conscience. For what can be more unmeet than in their cause to lean unto lies?[2] Admit he were a wicked man, and guilty, yet he must not have false witness borne

[1] "Ut quum homines essent idiotæ, summos Papatus theologos sola voce non minus quam fulmine attonitos redderent," that though they were unlearned men, they, by their voice alone, astonished the chief theologians of the Papacy, as much as if it had been by a thunderbolt. [2] "Quam in mendaciis causæ suæ præsidium constituere," than to place the defence of their cause in lies.

against him.[1] But hypocrites, which shroud themselves under zeal, do carelessly grant themselves leave to do that. We see how the Papists at this day corrupt manifest places of Scripture, and that wittingly, whilst that they will falsely wrest testimonies against us. I confess, indeed, that they offend for the most part through ignorance; yet can we find none of them which doth not grant himself liberty to corrupt both the sense and also the words of the Scripture, that they may bring our doctrine into contempt;[2] yea, they slander us monstrously even in the pulpit. If you ask these Rabbins, whether it be lawful to slander a man or no, they will deny that it is lawful generally; but when they come unto us, good zeal doth excuse them, because they think that nothing is unlawful which may burden us or our cause; therefore they flatter themselves in lying, falsehood, and dogged impudence. Such hypocrisy did also blind them of whom Luke speaketh in this place, which used false witness to put Stephen to death; for when Satan reigneth, he doth not only prick forward the reprobate unto cruelty, but also blind their eyes, so that they think that they may do whatsoever they will. We are specially taught by this example, how dangerous the colour of good zeal is, unless it be governed by the Spirit of God; for it breaketh out always into furious madness, and, in the mean season, it is a marvellous visor to cover all manner of wickedness.

14. *We have heard.* It shall full well appear by Stephen's defence, that he never spake anything touching Moses or the temple without reverence; and yet, notwithstanding, this was not laid to his charge for nothing, for he had taught the abrogating of the law. But they are false witnesses in this, and suborned to lie, because they corrupt purposely those things which were well and godlily spoken. So Christ was enforced to clear himself, that he came, not

[1] "Non tamen falsis testimoniis est opprimendus," he ought not to be borne down with false testimony. [2] "Ut doctrinam nostram reddant odiosam," that they may bring odium on our doctrine.

to destroy the law, but to fulfil the law; because, when he had preached of abrogating the ceremonies, the wicked wrested this unto another purpose, as if he meant to abolish and take away the whole law. Furthermore, they wrested that wickedly unto the temple of Jerusalem, which he spake of his body. What, was it not objected to Paul, that he taught, "That evil is to be done, that good may come thereof?"

Therefore, there is no cause why we should wonder at this day that that is so falsely misconstrued which we teach godlily, well, and profitably; yea, we must rather persuade ourselves thus, that the doctrine of the gospel can never be handled so warily and moderately, but that it shall be subject to false accusations; for Satan, who is the father of lying, doth always bestir himself in his office. Again, because there be many things which are contrary to the reason of the flesh, men are inclined to nothing more than to admit false reports, which corrupt the true and sincere sense of doctrine. This malice of Satan, and the sleights, ought to make us more wary and more circumspect, that no preposterous thing, or anything that is improperly spoken, escape us, wherewith they may be armed to fight against us; for we must carefully cut off from the wicked that occasion whereat they snatch. And if we see that doctrine, which is by us well and godlily delivered, corrupted, deformed, and torn in pieces with false reports, we must not repent that we have begun, neither yet is there any cause why we should be more slack hereafter; for it is not meet that we should be free from the poisoned and venomous bitings of Satan, which the Son of God himself could not escape. In the mean season, it is our part and duty to dash and put away those lies wherewith the truth of God is burdened, like as we see Christ free the doctrine of the gospel from unjust infamy. Only let us so prepare ourselves that such indignity and dishonest dealing may not hinder us in our course.

Because we teach that men are so corrupt, that they are altogether slaves unto sin and wicked lusts, the enemies

do thereupon infer this false accusation, that we deny that men sin willingly, but that they are enforced thereunto by some other means, so that they are not in the fault, neither bear any blame; yea, they say farther, that we quench altogether all desire to do well. Because we deny that the works of holy men are for their own worthiness meritorious, because they have always some fault or imperfection in them, they cavil that we put no difference between the good and the evil.[1] Because we say that man's righteousness consisteth in the grace of God alone, and that godly souls can find rest nowhere else, save only in the death of Christ; they object that by this means we grant liberty to the flesh, (to do whatsoever it will,) that the use of the law may no longer remain. When as we maintain the honour of Christ, which they bestow as it pleaseth them here and there, after that they have rent it in a thousand pieces like a prey; they feign that we are enemies to the saints, they falsely report that we seek the licentiousness of the flesh instead of the liberty of the Spirit. Whilst that we endeavour to restore the Supper of the Lord unto his pure and lawful use; they cry out impudently that we overthrow and destroy the same. Others also, which take away all things, as did the Academics, because that doth not please them which we teach concerning the secret predestination of God, and that out of the Scriptures, lay to our charge despitefully, that we make God a tyrant, which taketh pleasure in putting innocent men to death, seeing that he hath already adjudged those unto eternal death which are as yet unborn, and other such things as can be said on this behalf; whereas, notwithstanding, they are sufficiently convicted that we think reverently of God, and that we speak no otherwise than he teacheth with his own mouth. It is a hard matter to endure such envy, yet must we not therefore cease off to defend a good cause. For the truth of God is precious in

[1] "Bonorum et malorum discrimen a nobis tolli," that we destroy the distinction between good and evil.

his sight, and it ought also to be precious unto us, although it be unto the reprobate the savour of death unto death, (2 Cor. ii. 16.)

But now I return unto Stephen's accusation, the principal point whereof is this, that he blasphemed God and Moses. They do, for good considerations, make the injury common to God and to Moses, because Moses had nothing in his doctrine which was his own or separated from God. They prove this, because he spake blasphemously against the temple and the law; furthermore, they make this the blasphemy, because he said that the coming of Christ had made an end of the temple and the ceremonies. It is not credible that Stephen spake thus as they report; but they maliciously wrest those things which were spoken well and godlily, that they may colour their false accusation; but although they had changed nothing in the words, yet Stephen was so far from doing any injury to the law and the temple, that he could no way better and more truly praise the same. The Jews did suppose that the temple was quite dishonoured, unless the shadowy estate thereof should endure for ever, that the law of Moses was frustrate and nothing worth, unless the ceremonies should be continually in force. But the excellency of the temple and the profit of the ceremonies consist rather in this, whilst that they are referred unto Christ as unto their principal pattern. Therefore, howsoever the accusation hath some colour, yet is it unjust and wicked. And although the fact come in question, that is, whether the matter be so as the adversaries lay to his charge, notwithstanding the state [of the question] is properly [one] of quality, for they accuse Stephen, because he taught that the form of the worship of God which was then used should be changed; and they interpret this to be blasphemy against God and Moses; therefore the controversy is rather concerning right (as they say) than the fact itself; for the question is, Whether he be injurious and wicked against God and Moses, who saith, that the visible temple is an image of a more excellent sanctuary, wherein dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead, and who teacheth that the shadows of the law are temporal?

This Jesus of Nazareth. They speak thus of Christ disdainfully, as if the remembrance of him were detestable. Nevertheless, it may be gathered out of their accusations, that Stephen did, in the abrogating of the law, set the body against the shadows, and the substance against the figure; for if ceremonies be abolished by Christ, their truth is spiritual. The Jews, which would have them continue for ever, did consider nothing in them but that which was gross, carnal, earthly, and which might be seen with the eyes. Briefly, if the use of ceremonies were continual, they should be frail and should vanish away, because they should have nothing but the only external show, so that they should have no soundness. Therefore, this is their true perpetuity, when as they are abrogated by the coming of Christ; because it followeth hereupon that the force and effect thereof doth consist in Christ.

Shall change the ordinances. It is out of all doubt that Stephen meant this of the ceremonial part only; but because men are wont to be more addicted to external pomp, these men understand that which was spoken, as if Stephen would bring the whole law to nothing. The principal precepts of the law did indeed concern the spiritual worship of God, faith, justice, and judgment; but because these men make more account of the external rites, they call the rites which are commanded concerning the sacrifices, *ordinances of Moses*, by excellency. This was bred by the bone from the beginning of the world, and it will never out of the flesh so long as it lasteth.[1] As at this day the Papists acknowledge no worship of God save only in their visors; although they differ much from the Jews, because they follow nothing but the frivolous invention of men for the ordinances of God.

15. *And when they had beheld.* Men do commonly in places of judgment turn their eyes toward the party arraigned,

[1] "Hoc ab initio mundi fuit ingenium, et erit usque in finem," this has been the disposition from the beginning of the world, and will be even to the end.

when as they look for his defence. He saith that Stephen appeared like to an angel; this is not spoken of his natural face, but rather of his present countenance. For whereas the countenance of those which are arraigned useth commonly to be pale, whereas they stammer in their speech, and show other signs of fear, Luke teacheth that there was no such thing in Stephen, but that there appeared rather in him a certain majesty. For the Scripture useth sometimes to borrow a similitude of angels in this sense; as 1 Sam. xxiv. 9; 2 Sam. xiv. 17; 2 Sam. xix. 27.

CHAPTER VII.

1. *And the chief priest said, Are these things so?*
2. *He answered, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,*
3. *And he said unto him, Come out of thy country, and from amongst thy kindred, and come into the land which I will show thee.*
4. *Then he came out of the land of the Chaldees, and dwelt in Charran. After that his father was dead, God brought him thence into this land, wherein ye now dwell.*

1. There appeareth as yet some colour of equity in the high priest and in the council; and yet, notwithstanding, there is a most unjust prejudice in his words; for he asketh him not what cause he had to teach thus, neither doth he admit him unto the defence of right, (which was, notwithstanding, the chief;) but he demanded precisely whether Stephen uttered these words, whatsoever they were; as the Papists at this day will not demand what doctrine it is, and whether it can be proved out of the Scriptures; but they inquire[1] whether any man durst mutter against their super-

[1] "Sed tantum hoc quærunt," but the only thing they ask is.

stitions, that so soon as he is convict, they may forthwith burn[1] him. Furthermore, Stephen's answer may seem at the first blush absurd and foolish. He beginneth first at the very first beginning; afterwards he maketh a long narration, wherein there is no mention made, in a manner, of the matter in hand; and there can be no greater fault than to utter many words which are nothing appertinent unto the matter;[2] but whosoever shall thoroughly consider this long speech, he shall find nothing therein which is superfluous; and shall full well perceive that Stephen speaketh very appertinently,[3] as the matter requireth. He was accused as an apostate (or revolt,) which did attempt the overthrow of religion and the worship of God; therefore, he beateth in[4] this diligently, that he retaineth that God which the fathers have always worshipped, so that he turneth away the crime of wicked backsliding;[5] and declareth that his enemies were pricked forward with nothing less than with the zeal of the law, for they bear a show that they were wholly determined[6] to increase the glory of God; therefore, he wringeth from them this false boasting, and because they had the fathers always in their mouths, because they were puffed up with the glory of their nation, Stephen declareth also that they have no cause to be proud of this, but rather that the corruptions of the fathers were so great and so many, that they ought to be ashamed and humbled.

As concerning the principal state of the cause, because the question was concerning the temple and the ceremonies, he affirmeth plainly that their fathers were elected of God to be a peculiar people before there was any temple, and before Moses was born; and to this end tendeth that *exordium* or beginning which is so far fet, (fetched.) Secondly, he telleth them that all external rites which God gave by the hand of Moses were fashioned according to the heavenly pattern.

[1] "Vulcano devoveant," devote him to Vulcan, (to the flames.) [2] "Et extra rem vagari," and wander from the subject. [3] "Apposito," appositely. [4] "Sedulo igitur inculcat," he therefore strenuously maintains. [5] "Ita impiæ defectiones crimen avertit," he thus repels the charge of impious defection or revolt. [6] "Simulabant enim nihil sibi esse propositum quam," for they pretended that their only object was.

Whereupon it followeth, that the ceremonial law is referred unto another end, and that those deal foolishly and disorderly who omit the truth, and stay only in the signs. If the readers shall refer the whole oration of Stephen unto these points, they shall find nothing therein which agreeth not very well with the cause, as I shall declare again briefly in the end; nevertheless, that scope of the whole oration shall not hinder but that we may discuss all things briefly which are worth the noting.

2. *Men, brethren, and fathers.* Although Stephen saw that those which sat in the council were, for the most part, the sworn enemies of Christ, yet because the ordinary government of the people did belong to them, and they had the oversight of the Church, which God had not as yet cast off, therefore, he is not afraid, for modesty's sake, to call them fathers. Neither doth he flatteringly purchase favour hereby; but he giveth this honour to the order and government appointed by God, until such time as the authority should be taken from them, the order being altered. Nevertheless, the reverence of the place which they had doth not hinder him nor stop his mouth; but that he doth freely dissent from them, whereby it appeareth how ridiculous the Papists are who will have us so tied unto bare and vain invented titles, that they may enforce us to subscribe unto their decrees, though they be never so wicked.

The God of glory. By this beginning, he declareth that he doth not disagree or dissent from the fathers in true religion which they followed; for all religion, the worship of God, the doctrine of the law, all prophecies, did depend upon that covenant which God made with Abraham; therefore, when Stephen confessed that God appeared to Abraham, he embraceth the law and the prophets, which flow from that first revelation as from a fountain; moreover, he calleth him the *God of glory*, that he may distinguish him from the false and feigned gods, who alone is worthy of glory.

When he was in Mesopotamia. It is well known that that

region is called by this name which lieth between the river Tigris and Euphrates; and he saith before, he dwelt in Charran, because Abraham, being warned by an oracle, fled[1] from Chaldea to Charran, which is a city of Mesopotamia, famous by reason of the slaughter of Crassus and the Roman army; although Pliny saith that it was a city of Arabia; and it is no marvel that Chaldea is in this place comprehended under the name of Mesopotamia, because, although that region, which is enclosed with Tigris and Euphrates, [Mesopotamia,] be properly the country between two rivers, yet those which set down any description of countries[2] do call both Assyria and Chaldea by this name.

The sum is this, that Abraham being commanded by God, did forsake his country, and so he was prevented with the mere goodness of God when as he sought that which was offered him at home of the [its] own accord. Read the last chapter of Joshua; but it seemeth that Moses' narration doth somewhat disagree with this, for after that, about the end of the 11th chapter of Genesis, he had declared, that Abraham doth [did] go into another country to dwell, having left his house, he addeth, in the beginning of the 12th, that *God spake unto Abraham.* This is easily answered, for Moses reciteth not in this latter place what happened after the departure of Abraham; but lest any man should think that Abraham wandered into other countries, having unadvisedly forsaken his own house, (as light and indiscreet men[3] used to do sometimes,) he showeth the cause of his departure, to wit, because he was commanded by God to flit into another place. And thus much do the words of the oracle import. For, if he had been a stranger in another country, God could not have commanded him to depart out of his native soil, forsaking his kinsmen and father's house. Therefore, we see that this place agreeth wondrous well with the words of Moses. For after that Moses hath said that Abraham went to Charran, to the end he may show that this journey was

[1] "Migravit," migrated. [2] "Geographi," geographers. [3] "Leves et inconsiderati homines," fickle and inconsiderate.

taken in hand, not through any lightness of man, but at the commandment of God, he addeth that afterwards which he had before omitted, which manner of speaking is much used of the Hebrews.

3. *Come out of thy country.* God useth many words, to the end he may the more wound the mind of Abraham, as if it were not a thing sharp enough of itself to be banished out of his own country. And that served to try his faith; even as that other thing also, that God assigneth him no land wherein he may dwell, but maketh him stand in doubt, and wait for a time. Wherefore the obedience of Abraham was so much the more to be commended, because the sweetness of his native soil keepeth him not back from going willingly, as it were, into exile; and in that he doubteth not to follow God, although there appear no certain resting-place, but is commanded to wander to and fro for a time. Whereas, the showing of the land is deferred, it differeth not much from deceiving of him.[1]

Furthermore, we learn continually by our own experience how profitable it was for Abraham thus to be exercised, and, as it were, trained by little and little. Many men are carried with a godly affection to attempt great things, but by and by, so soon as their heat is waxen cold, it repenteth them of their purpose, and they would gladly slip their necks out of the collar.[2] Therefore, lest Abraham should faint when he was in the midst of his course, through the remembrance of those things which he had left behind him, God sifteth and trieth his mind thoroughly, immediately after he had begun, lest he take anything in hand lightly and unadvisedly. To this purpose serveth the parable which Christ setteth before us concerning the building of the tower, (Luke xiv. 28.) For he teacheth that we must first cast the charges, lest with shame we be enforced to leave off building after we have begun. And though this

[1] "A frustratione," from a frustrating of him, from rendering his journey vain. [2] "Ac libenter cursum reflecterent," and they would willingly retrace their steps.

were a particular thing in Abraham, in that he was commanded to go out of his own country, and to go into a far country, in that God carried him from place to place, yet, notwithstanding, there is in these words some figure of the calling of us all. We are not all simply commanded to forsake our country, but we are commanded to deny ourselves; we are not commanded to come out of our father's house, but to bid adieu to our own will, and to the desires of our own flesh. Again, if father and mother, wife and children, hinder us from following God, we must forsake them all. The commandment is given simply to Abraham to flit; but we are commanded to do the same upon condition. For if in any place we cannot serve God, we must rather make choice of exile than to stay in our nest, being slothful and sluggish. Therefore, let us have the example of Abraham always before our eyes. He is the father of the faithful, he was tried all manner of ways. Doth he forget his country, his friends, and himself, that he may give over himself unto God? (Rom. iv. 16, 17.) If we will be counted the children of God, we must not degenerate from him.

Which I shall show thee. We must note that which I touched a little before, that Abraham is kept in doubt, to the end his patience may be tried. And this must we also apply to our own use, that we may learn to depend wholly upon God. And surely this is a principal exercise of our faith to put our trust in God, even when we see nothing. God, indeed, will oftentimes show us a land wherein he granteth us an abiding-place; yet, notwithstanding, because we are strangers in the world, we have no certain and continual place of abode anywhere. Again, our life, as Paul saith, is hid, (Colos. iii. 3;) and being like unto dead men, we hope for salvation, which is hid in heaven. Therefore, as touching our perpetual habitation, God doth cause us to depend upon his providence alone, when he commandeth us, as it were, to wander in a strange country. Lest such deferring discourage us, we must hold this general rule of

faith, that we must go whither God calleth us, howsoever he do not show that which he promiseth.

4. *Then going out.* The readiness and willingness of faith is commended in these words. For when he is called he maketh no delay, but maketh haste[1] and subdueth all his affections, that they may obey the holy commandment of God. It is uncertain for what cause he stayed at Charran; yet it may be that the weakness of his father caused him to tarry there, who, as we read, died there shortly after; or else, because he durst go no further, until such time as the Lord had told him whither he should go. It is more like to be true in mine opinion, that he was stayed there a while with the wearisomeness and sickness of his father, because Stephen saith plainly that he was brought thence after the death of his father.

5. *And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not the breadth of a foot; and promised that he would give it to him to possess, and to his seed after him, when as he had no son.*

6. *And God spake after this manner, Thy seed shall sojourn in a strange land; and they shall bring it into bondage, and shall evil entreat it four hundred years.*

7. *But the nation whom they shall serve will I judge, said God. And afterwards they shall come out, and shall worship me in this place.*

8. *And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so he begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.*

5. We must note three things in this place; that God exercised the patience of his servant, because, after that he had brought him out of his own country, he dwelt in the land of Canaan as a stranger.

[First,] For Abraham possessed not one foot's-breadth, save only that which he bought to bury in. And that is

[1] "Non procrastinat, sed moras omnes rampit," he does not procrastinate, but breaks off all delay.

counted no possession which serveth not for the uses of this life. Secondly, forasmuch as that field was bought, Stephen doth for good causes say, that God gave Abraham nothing. For that could not be gotten either with money, or by any other means which man could invent, which Abraham did hope for of the promise.

Secondly, we must note, that though God did not show Abraham the thing itself as yet, yet did he uphold him by his word. And this is our stay, when God promiseth that that is laid up for us which as yet we possess not. Therefore, when as the thing, that is, the possession of the land, was wanting, Abraham had for his help and stay the promise of God; and being content with the same alone, he desired nothing in the land of Canaan save only an uncertain resting-place wherein he might sojourn.

For as much as επαγγελλεσθαι signifieth simply to promise, I thought there was no cause why, with Erasmus, I should translate it in this place, to *promise again.* For I resolve it adversatively, *although he had promised,* that by the way we may note, as it were, a show of deceiving,[1] unless peradventure some man be disposed to apply it unto the promises which are oftentimes repeated.[2]

Thirdly, we must note that the promise was such that it did not much differ from a mere mock. God promised the land to the seed of Abraham when he was fourscore years old, and had to wife one that was barren, neither had he any hope to have any issue. This seemeth to be more than frivolous. For why doth he not rather promise that he will give him seed? But this was a notable trial of faith, in that Abraham, without asking any question, or any curious disputation, did obediently and meekly embrace that which he had heard proceed out of the mouth of the Lord. Therefore, let us remember that God doth so lift up and comfort his servant with his word, that he doth not only defer the giving of the thing,[3] but also he may seem after a

[1] "Ut oblique species frustrationis," that a species of frustration may be indirectly noted. [2] "Quod liberum relinquo," I leave the point open, omitted. [3] "Exhibitionem," the exhibition, or manifestation.

sort to mock him; as he dealeth with us also in some respect. For, although he call us the heirs of the world, (James ii. 5,) he suffereth us oftentimes to want even a competent living and necessary helps. And this doth he of set purpose, that he may bring the wisdom of the flesh to nought, seeing that we do not otherwise give due honour to his word.

6. *Thy seed shall be a stranger.* Stephen putteth the Jews in mind in how miserable and reproachful an estate their fathers were in Egypt; and showeth that this their servitude, wherewith they were oppressed, came not by chance; because it was foretold long before by the oracle of God. This history ought to have been of great force, partly to tame their lofty courages,[1] and to teach them modesty; partly to set forth the grace of God, because God had always had a care of that nation. For this is a singular benefit, in that the people are restored wonderfully, as it were, from death to life. In the mean season, the Jews are taught that the Church of God was elsewhere than in the land wherein they dwelt; that the fathers were chosen to be a peculiar people, and that they were kept safe under the tuition of God, before ever the temple was built, or the external ceremonies of the law were instituted.

These things appertain unto the general scope or drift of the sermon. But hence may we gather a profitable admonition. Bondage is of itself hard and bitter; but when cruelty of masters is added thereunto, it seemeth to be intolerable. Wherefore, it must needs be that the mind of the godly man was sore wounded, when he heard that his seed should serve, and be villanously and cruelly entreated. Moreover, this was no small trial; forasmuch as these things were, to look to, contrary—the inheritance of the land of Canaan which was now promised, and bondage in a strange country. For who would not have thought that God had, as it were, forgotten his former promise, when as he telleth

[1] "Feroces illorum spiritus," their fierce tempers.

Abraham that his seed shall endure miserable bondage? He saith, at the first, that he will give his seed the land. But he had as yet no seed; yea, all hope of seed was now cut off. But when doth he promise that he will give it? After his death. By and by he saith, that that seed should be carried away to another place, that it may serve strangers. And how long? Four hundred years. Doth he not seem, by this means, to pull back his hand, that he may not perform that which he had promised?

Let us know that this was done, (not once only,) for God dealeth oftentimes with us thus, so that he may seem contrary to himself; and he speaketh also in such sort as that he may seem to call back[1] that which he had promised. Therefore, it cannot be but that flesh will judge that he is contrary to himself; but faith doth know that his words do agree well together amongst themselves, and with his works. And this is the purpose of God, to the end he may extend the sight of our faith the farther, to show his promises afar off, as it were, a long place [space] being put between. Therefore it is our duty to go forward, and to strive to attain unto that salvation which is set before us through many straits,[2] through divers lets, through long distance, through the midst of deeps, and, finally, through death itself. Furthermore, seeing that we see that the people which God had chosen did serve the Egyptians, and was uncourteously[3] afflicted, we must not be discouraged if the like condition be prepared for us at this day. For it is no new thing, neither any unwonted thing, for the Church of God to lie oppressed under tyranny, and to be, as it were, trodden under foot of the wicked.

7. *The nation whom they shall serve.* This judgment is joined with the deliverance of the people. For, whereas God doth punish the cruelty and tyranny of the wicked

[1] "Retractare," to retract.

[2] "Per innumeros anfractus," through innumerable wanderings.

[3] "Inhumaniter," inhumanly.

Egyptians, he doth that for his people's sake, whom he took into his tuition, that it may be seen that he is the deliverer of his Church. Therefore, so often as we are unjustly afflicted by the wicked, let us remember that God is the Judge of the world, who will let no injuries be unpunished. Let every man thus think with himself, Seeing that I am under the tuition of God, who is the Judge of the world, and to whom it belongeth to punish all injuries, those shall not escape his hand who trouble me now. There is the like place in Deuteronomy xxxii. 43, where God saith that vengeance is his. Whence Paul gathereth that we must give place to wrath, (Rom. xii. 19;) as if he should say, that this ought to serve to reform impatience, and to bridle our evil affections, in that God promiseth that he will revenge; for he which revengeth himself doth take God's office from him. And let us still remember that which I have already said, that God is touched with an especial care to revenge injuries done to his children, as it is in the Psalm, "Hurt not mine anointed, and be not troublesome to my prophets."

They shall come thence and serve me. Therefore their deliverance went before the temple and the worship of the law; whereupon it followeth, that the grace of God was not tied to ceremonies. Nevertheless, Stephen noteth the end of their deliverance, that God chose both a peculiar people and a peculiar place for the true worship of his name. Whence we gather again, that we must regard what he commandeth and alloweth. Other nations also were determined to worship God; but because their rites were corrupt and bastardly,[1] God doth separate the Jews from the rest, and assigneth them a place where he will have them to worship him sincerely and duly as they ought. This place teacheth us, that God's benefits must be referred to this end, that men might be brought to addict and give over themselves wholly to him. Now, since that God hath dis-

[1] "Degeneres," degenerate.

persed the treasures of his grace throughout the whole world, we must endeavour to sanctify him, by worshipping him purely and holily, in what country soever we dwell.

8. *He gave him the covenant.* When as he confesseth that circumcision is the covenant of God, he cleareth himself sufficiently of that crime which was laid to his charge; but, in the mean season, he showeth that the Jews deal amiss, if they place the beginning of their salvation in the external sign. For if Abraham was called, and the land and redemption promised to his seed before such time as he was circumcised, it appeareth that the glory of the whole stock doth not depend upon circumcision. Paul useth the same argument in the 4th chapter to the Romans, (Rom. iv. 11.) For, seeing that Abraham obtained righteousness, and pleased God before he was circumcised, he gathereth thence that circumcision is not the cause of righteousness. Therefore we see that Stephen frameth no vain and idle narration; because this was very much appertinent unto the cause, that the Jews might remember how God had adopted them with their fathers, and it is to be thought that Stephen did plainly express both things; that although circumcision was given by God, that it might be a sign of grace, yet was the adoption before it both in order and in time. But we have no need to dispute any longer in this place concerning the nature and force of circumcision. Only let us note this, that God doth first promise those things to Abraham which he confirmeth afterward by circumcision, that we may know that the signs are vain and nothing worth, unless the word go before. Let us also note, that there is a profitable doctrine contained in the word *covenant*, to wit, that God maketh his covenant with us in the sacraments, that he may declare his love toward us; which thing, if it be true, first, they are not only works of external profession amongst men, but they gave great force inwardly before God, to confirm the faith. Secondly, they are no vain figures; because

God, who is true, figureth nothing there which he doth not perform.

9. *And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt. Notwithstanding, God was with him ;*
10. *And he delivered him out of all his afflictions : and he gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt, and over all his house.*
11. *And there came a famine upon all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction ; neither did our fathers find food.*
12. *And when Jacob had heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent our fathers thither first.*
13. *And at the second coming Joseph was known of his brethren ; and the kindred of Joseph was made known to Pharaoh.*
14. *Then Joseph sent, and called out his father Jacob and all his kindred, seventy-five souls.*
15. *And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, and our fathers ;*
16. *And they were carried into Sychem, and they were laid in the sepulchre which Abraham had bought for money of the sons of Hemor, the son* [*father*] *of Sychem.*

9. Now followeth the greatest wickedness of the nation of Israel, that they conspired[1] together to oppress their innocent brother, which cruelty is contrary[2] to nature. Neither could the Jews object that it was a private fault of a few; for the infamy reacheth unto all the people. Forasmuch as all the patriarchs, Benjamin excepted, had polluted themselves with that treachery ; therefore, in that Stephen vouchsafeth to give them an honourable name, that redoundeth to the greater reproach of the nation. They boasted proudly of their fathers ; he showeth what manner [of] persons the chief of them were ; to wit, murderers of their brother,[3] so much as in them laid. For, besides that slavery

[1] "Impia et nefaria conspiratione," by a nefarious and impious conspiracy. [2] "Abhorret," is abhorrent from. [3] "Fratricidæ," fratricides.

was a kind of death, we know what they went about at the first, and, secondly, what cruel punishments Joseph suffered, of all which his brethren were guilty. Hereby it appeareth that God was bountiful and merciful to those which were, as it were, unwilling, and which did resist him. For him (who was about to be the author of health and help[1]) would they have destroyed. Wherefore they did what they could to renounce all the benefits of God. So he will declare afterward that Moses was rejected when he was offered of God to be a redeemer. Therefore, the Jews have small cause to brag of the excellency of their kindred; but this alone remaineth for them, that, being ashamed,[2] they confess that whosoever they are, they have the same through the mere mercy of God, and that they consider that the law was given to set forth the same.

God was with him. God was not so with him that he did always show forth his power in helping him. For that is no small thing which is said in the Psalm, (cv. 18,) "That the iron went through his soul." Surely, it must needs be that he was in great heaviness,[3] when, being destitute of all help, he suffered reproach also, together with bonds and the punishment of an ungodly and wicked man; but God useth oftentimes to be present with his in such sort, that he lieth hid for a time. And the end was an evident[4] token of his presence, which Joseph saw not at the first. Furthermore, we ought to remember this every now and then, that Joseph was not delivered because he had called upon God in the [a] temple, but afar off in Egypt.

10. Stephen addeth the means, because God gave him favour in the sight of Pharaoh. God could have delivered him by some other means, but his counsel had respect unto a farther thing, that Joseph, being ruler of the kingdom, might entertain his father and all his family. In these two words, *favour* and *wisdom*, there is the figure *hypallage*. For

[1] "Salutis minister," the minister or instrument of their safety.
[2] "Pudore confusi," confounded with shame.
[3] "Ingenti mœrore confundi," overwhelmed with deepest sorrow
[4] "Illustre," illustrious.

the wisdom wherewith Joseph was endued was the cause that he found favour; although I confess that they were two distinct benefits. For, though Joseph were a faithful interpreter of dreams, and did excel in divine wisdom, yet the proud tyrant would never have brought him to so great honour, unless God had bent the mind of Pharaoh unto a certain unwonted love; yet, notwithstanding, we must consider that order whereby God useth to bring him into favour.[1] *Wisdom* doth not only signify the gift of prophecy in interpreting dreams, but prudence in giving counsel; for Moses putteth in both. That which Stephen reporteth of one man in this place is extended unto all. For what aptness and readiness[2] soever is in men, it ought to be reckoned amongst the gifts of God, and that his special gifts.[3] And it is he that giveth good success as it pleaseth him, that his gifts may be profitable to that end for which it seemed good to him to give them. Therefore, although Joseph be made chief ruler of Egypt by Pharaoh, yet is he lifted up to so great honour properly by the hand of God.[4]

11. *There came a famine.* Hereby it appeareth that the deliverance of Joseph was such a benefit as was common to all the family of Jacob. For, seeing the famine drew on,[5] Joseph was sent before in due time to provide sustenance to feed the hungry; as he himself doth acknowledge the wonderful counsel of God in that point. Nevertheless, the free goodness of God appeareth plainly in the person of Joseph, whilst that he is appointed to nourish and feed his brethren, who had sold him, and by that means sent him far away, and thought that he was gone away quite[6] out of the world. He putteth meat in their mouths who had thrown him into a pit, and had deprived him of the air and the common breath. Finally, he nourisheth and preserveth

[1] "Illi Deus gratiam conciliat," procureth favour for him. [2] "Dexteritas," dexterity. [3] "Pro modo inæquali," according to the unequal mode of distribution, omitted. [4] "Non nisi Dei manu," by nought but the hand of God. [5] "Ventura esset," was about to come. [6] "Prorsus exterminatum," completely exterminated.

their life who were not afraid[1] to take from him his life. In the mean season, Stephen putteth the Jews in mind of this, that the patriarchs were enforced to depart out of that land which was given them for an heritage, and that they died in another place. Therefore, forasmuch as they were sojourners in it, they are at length banished out of the same.[2]

14. Whereas he saith that Jacob came into Egypt with seventy-five souls, it agreeth not with the words of Moses; for Moses maketh mention of seventy only. Jerome thinketh that Luke setteth not down, word for word, those things which Stephen had spoken, or that he took this number out of the Greek translation of Moses, (Gen. xlvi. 27,) either because he himself, being a proselyte, had not the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, or because he would grant the Gentiles this, who used to read it thus.[3] Furthermore, it is uncertain whether the Greek interpreters set down this number of set purpose, or whether it crop [crept] in afterward through negligence, [mistake;] which (I mean the latter) might well be, forasmuch as the Grecians used to set down their numbers in letters. Augustine, in his 26th book of City of God, [*De Civitate Dei,*] thinketh that Joseph's nephews and kinsmen[4] are comprehended in this number; and so he thinketh that the words *went down* doth signify all that time which Jacob lived. But that conjecture can by no means be received. For, in the mean space, the other patriarchs also had many children born to them. This seemeth to me a thing like to be true, that the Seventy Interpreters did translate that truly which was in Moses. And we cannot say that they were deceived; forasmuch as [in] Deut. x., where this number is repeated, they agree with Moses, at least as that place was read without all doubt in the time of Jerome; for those copies which are printed at this day have it otherwise. Therefore, I think that this

[1] "Non dubitaverant," had not hesitated. [2] "Exulant," become exiles.
[3] "Apud quas recepta erat illa lectio," among whom that reading was received. [4] "Nepotes ac pronepotes," grandsons and great-grandsons.

difference came through the error of the writers which wrote out the books.[1] And it was a matter of no such weight, for which Luke ought to have troubled the Gentiles which were accustomed with the Greek reading. And it may be that he himself did put down the true number; and that some man did correct the same amiss out of that place of Moses. For we know that those which had the New Testament in hand were ignorant of the Hebrew tongue, yet skilful in[2] the Greek.

Therefore, to the end [that] the words of Stephen might agree with the place of Moses, it is to be thought that that false number which was found in the Greek translation of Genesis was by them put in also in this place; concerning which, if any man contend more stubbornly, let us suffer him to be wise without measure. Let us remember that it is not without cause that Paul doth forbid us to be too curious about genealogies. This, so small a number, is purposely expressed, to the end the power of God may the more plainly appear, in so great an enlarging of that kindred, which was of no long continuance. For such a small handful of men could not, by any human manner of engendering, grow to such an infinite multitude as is recorded in Exodus, (xii. 37,) within two hundred and fifty years. We ought rather to weigh the miracle which the Spirit commendeth unto us in this place, than to stand long about one letter, whereby the number is altered. There arise other questions (and those which are more hard to be answered) out of the rest of the text, [context.]

16. Stephen saith, that the patriarchs were carried into the land of Canaan after they were dead. But Moses maketh mention only of the bones of Joseph, (Gen. l. 13.) And Joshua xxiv. (32,) it is reported, that the bones of Joseph were buried without making any mention of the rest. Some answer, that Moses speaketh of Joseph for honour's sake, because he had given express commandment concerning his

[1] "Librariorum," copyists. [2] "Familiariter," familiar with.

bones, which we cannot read to have been done of the rest. And, surely, when Jerome, in the pilgrimage of Paula, saith, that she came by Shechem, he saith that she saw there the sepulchres of the twelve patriarchs; but in another place he maketh mention of Joseph's grave only. And it may be that there were empty tombs[1] erected to the rest. I can affirm nothing concerning this matter for a certainty, save only that this is either a speech wherein is *synecdoche*, or else that Luke rehearseth this not so much out of Moses, as according to the old fame; as the Jews had many things in times past from the fathers, which were delivered, as it were, from hand to hand. And whereas he saith afterward, they were laid in the sepulchre which Abraham had bought of the sons of Hemor, it is manifest that there is a fault [mistake] in the word Abraham. For Abraham had bought a double cave of Ephron the Hittite, (Gen. xxiii. 9,) to bury his wife Sarah in; but Joseph was buried in another place, to wit, in the field which his father Jacob had bought of the sons of Hemor for an hundred lambs. Wherefore this place must be amended.

17. *And when the time of the promise drew near, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people increased, and was multiplied in Egypt,*
18. *Until another king arose, which knew not Joseph:*
19. *This man dealt subtilely with our kindred; he evil-entreated our fathers, that they might cast out their infants, lest they should be increased.*

17. Stephen passeth over unto the deliverance of the people, before which[2] went that innumerable issue which had increased beyond the ordinary manner in no long space of time. Therefore, he setteth down this as a singular gift of God, that the people was increased, to the end we may know that that came not to pass according to the common or wonted custom of nature. But, on the other side, God

[1] "Κενοτάφια," cœnotaphs.

[2] "Cujus præludium," as a prelude to which.

seemeth to take from the Jews all hope, because Pharaoh doth tyrannously afflict them, and their bondage groweth greater daily. And when as they are commanded to cast out their male infants, it seemeth that the destruction of the whole nation was present. There is another token of deliverance given, when Moses cometh abroad; but because he is by and by refused and enforced to fly into exile, there remaineth nothing but mere despair. The sum is this; that God, being mindful of his promise, did increase the people in time, that he might perform that which he had sworn to Abraham; but the Jews (as they were unthankful and froward) did refuse the grace of God, so that they did what they could to shut up the way before themselves. Furthermore, we must note the providence of God in this place, whilst that he doth so order the course of times, that his works have always their opportunity. But men who make haste disorderly in their desires cannot hope patiently, and be at rest, until such time as God showeth forth his hand; for this cause, because they take no heed to that moderation whereof I have spoken. And to the end God may exercise the faith of his children so often as he appeareth with joyful tokens of grace, he setteth other things against those on the other side, which cut off suddenly the hope of salvation. For who would not have said of the Hebrews, that they were utterly undone, when as the king's commandment appointed all the men children to be put to death? For which cause the meditating upon that doctrine is the most [more] necessary for us, that God doth kill and restore to life; he leadeth unto hell, and bringeth back again,

19. *Dealt subtilely.* The old interpreter did not translate this amiss, to *deceive.*[1] For Stephen meaneth that the king of Egypt did craftily invent new shifts and wicked pretences, that he might every now and then lay heavier burdens upon the people, likeas almost all tyrants do; for how unjustly soever they vex their subjects, they are [but] too witty

[1] "Circumvenire," to circumvent.

to invent excuses. And it is not to be doubted but that Pharaoh abused this honest colour, that it was not meet that the Jews, who were sojourners, should have a place of abode in his realm for nought, and that they should be free from all burthens, seeing they did enjoy great commodities. Therefore, he deceitfully made them vile bondslaves of freemen. When Stephen saith that this tyrant knew not Joseph, hereby it appeareth how soon the remembrance of benefits passeth away among men. For although we do all with one consent detest unthankfulness, yet is there no vice more common amongst us.

Lest they should be increased. Erasmus translateth this improperly, in my judgment. For ζωογονεισθαι expresseth more than *lest their children should live.* For the word is fet [fetched] thence, because the people doth all always remain alive in the offspring. And, furthermore, Stephen doth not reckon up all the parts of their evil-entreating, but putteth down one example of extreme cruelty. Whence we may easily gather how near the whole seed of Abraham was to destruction. For Pharaoh seemed to have murdered them all with that commandment as with one stroke of a sword. But such violent barbarism did the more set forth the unlooked-for and incredible power of God; because when Pharaoh hath, by all means possible, striven against God, yet all is in vain.

20. *At that time was Moses born, who was acceptable to God. And he was brought up three months in his father's house.*
21. *And the daughter of Pharaoh took him up when he was cast out, and nourished him up for her own son.*
22. *And Moses was taught in all wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and deed.*
23. *And when the time of forty years was fulfilled, it came into his mind to go visit his brethren, the children of Israel.*
24. *And when he saw one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and revenged him which had the wrong, having smitten the Egyptian.*
25. *And he thought that his brethren would have understood that*

God by his hand should give them deliverance; but they understood not.

26. *The next day he was seen as they strove, and set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren: why hurt ye one another?*

27. *And he which did injury to his neighbour thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?*

28. *Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?*

29. *And Moses fled at this saying, and became a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.*

20. It is not without cause that Stephen noteth the circumstance of time. Moses was born at the very same time when the king had commanded that all the men children should be cast out. Therefore, it seemeth that the minister of deliverance is dead before he is born. But that time is most fit for God to work in, when there is no hope or counsel to be looked for at man's hands. And it appeareth also most plainly how God doth make perfect his power in man's weakness, (2 Cor. xii. 9.) Moses is kept three months, but at length his parents (that they may save their own lives) are enforced to cast him out into the river. Only they put him into a little coffer,[1] that he may not by and by [immediately] perish. When as Pharaoh's daughter taketh him up, he escaped death indeed, yet so that he goeth into another nation, being cut off from the kindred of Israel. Yea, he was like to be a most troublesome adversary to his nation, unless God had restrained his mind. It is forty years before he showeth any token of brotherly good-will.

22. Whereas Luke reporteth that he was taught in *all wisdom* of the Egyptians, he putteth that in his commendation as a point of excellency. Notwithstanding, it might have so fallen out, as it doth oftentimes, that being puffed up with profane sciences, he might have despised the base

[1] "Arculam," a little chest, a baskot.

common people; yet because God had determined to redeem his people, he doth, in the mean season, frame both the mind of Moses and all other things to finish his work. The reason of man's flesh[1] should murmur in this place, Why doth God wink at so long miseries of the people? Why doth he suffer Pharaoh to rage more cruelly daily? Why doth he not suffer Moses to grow up amongst his own people? Why doth he after a sort cut him off from the kindred of Israel, being adopted by the king's daughter? Why will he suffer him to remain amidst courtly pleasures,[2] and doth not rather pull him thence? But the end itself is so wonderful, that we are enforced to confess that all these things were governed by singular counsel and order to set forth the glory of God.

Whereas I said that Luke speaketh in this place of the learning of the Egyptians for honour's sake, I would not have it so taken as if there were in the same no corruption. Forasmuch as astrology[3] doth consider the wonderful workmanship of God, not only in the placing of the stars, and in such excellent variety, but also in their moving, force, and secret offices, it is a science both profitable and worthy of praise. The Egyptians bestowed great study in this, but being not content with the simple order of nature, they wandered also into many foolish speculations, as did the Chaldeans. It is uncertain whether Moses was infected with these superstitions or no. Yet, howsoever it be, we see how sincerely and plainly he setteth that before us to be considered in the frame of the world, which is appertinent unto godliness. Surely this was excellent modesty, in that he which could reason with learned and witty men of the secrets of nature, doth not only omit higher subtleties, but doth also descend unto the common capacity of every most simple man, and doth, in a common style, set forth unto men unlearned those things which they perceive by experience.

[1] "Carnis ratio," carnal reason. [2] "Ad annum quadragesimum," till his fortieth year. [3] "Astrologia," astrology, or, more properly here, astronomy.

When Justinian [Justin] babbleth concerning Moses, he maketh him a magician, which, with juggling and enchantments, made passage for the people through the Red Sea; so that Satan did not only go about to bury the power of God, but also to blaspheme the same. But we know that Moses did not strive with the enchanters by magic, but did that only which God had enjoined him.

Furthermore, the Egyptians had mystical divinity, wherewith they coloured their doting inventions and monstrous abominations, as if they would prove that they went mad not without reason: as the Papists, whereas they delude and mock men like stage-players, in their mass and other foolish rites, yet they invent mysteries, that they may persuade men that there is nothing there but that which is divine. The common sort of priests cannot climb so high, but those which amongst them will be accounted more cunning[1] do omit no rite, how foolish and childish soever it be, affirming that there is some spiritual mystery in every [one] of them. There is extant concerning this matter a most foolish mingle-mangle, which they call the Rationall [Rationale] of Divine Offices. But forasmuch as sacrificing priests alone did use such dotings amongst themselves, it is not to be thought that Moses spent any time in these, whose bringing up was princely, but that he was taught in liberal arts.

He was mighty. This phrase doth express among the Hebrews a double excellency, when as he which doth excel in wit and learning, is also apt to attempt and bring to pass great and weighty matters.[2] Stephen's meaning is, therefore, that Moses was furnished with rare gifts, so that they did all confess that he was a singular man. But seeing he was in such estimation, the Israelites had the less hope that he should be the minister which should work their deliverance.

23. *When the time was fulfilled.* Many gather by this

[1] "Perspicaces," clear-sighted.

[2] "Ad res præclaras gerendas aptus est," is fitted for great exploits.

that Moses was never estranged in mind from his nation; but the words of Stephen incline rather toward the contrary, to wit, that the Spirit of God did at length awake his mind, as it were out of sleep, that he might at length go visit his brethren, whom he had long time neglected. It is to be thought that he was not ignorant of what stock he came, seeing he had some token thereof in his flesh, and seeing the rumour thereof was spread abroad in the court, because the king's daughter could not adopt him to be her son without some suspicion of wickedness, unless his kindred had been known; yet was it long before he was of such courage that he durst make known the love which he bare toward his kindred. And this serveth not a little to set forth the glory of God, that Moses, being ignorant of his calling, doth remain a long time idle in the king's court, and is afterward called of the Lord contrary to the hope of all men, and his own also. Therefore, this new care for his brethren which came into his mind, proceeded from a new and unwonted motion of God's Spirit.

24. *When he saw a certain man.* Moses came not to this spectacle by chance, but forasmuch as God had appointed him to be the deliverer of his people, he would have him show forth this token, and, as it were, make this beginning. For Stephen doth plainly express that he did attempt nothing unadvisedly, but did that which became him that was appointed to be a deliverer of the people, knowing that he was thereunto called. For unless God had armed him, (and made him puissant,) it had been a thing altogether unlawful for him to kill any man, how wicked soever he had been. It is a godly deed, and praiseworthy, for a man to set himself against the wicked, to defend the good against the injuries of the wicked, to bridle their violence; but it is not for a private person to punish, (or take vengeance.) Therefore, it was unlawful for Moses to slay the Egyptian, save only inasmuch as the Lord had put the sword in his hand according to the right of his calling. But this

heroical courage and nobleness of heart[1] was a work of the Holy Ghost; because God doth mightily show forth his power in those whom he appointeth unto great matters, that they may be able to fulfil their function. In sum, Stephen meaneth that Moses was even then offered to be the minister of deliverance when the day was at hand, according to the covenant made with Abraham, yet did the people hope for nothing less.

26. *The day following he appeared.* Stephen declareth now that the fathers did not only neglect, but maliciously reject the grace of God. For although the evil which he mentioneth did proceed from one man only, yet doth he by right assign the fault unto them all. For if they had been thankful to God, they would all with one consent have repressed his forwardness.[2] But they are whisht,[3] and suffer that good turn which Moses had done to be upbraided unto him; and, so much as in them lieth, they bring them into extreme danger whom they ought to have defended by endangering themselves.[4] Therefore, his drift is this, that the people themselves were in the fault, that they were no sooner delivered and eased.[5] So the wickedness of men doth oftentimes hinder God from doing that [which] he would do. He is ready to help those that be his in due time, but we keep back his hand from ourselves with divers lets, and afterwards we complain of his slowness, but unjustly. Furthermore, this unthankfulness was too wicked against God, and too cruel against Moses. They were to thank God for giving such a faithful patron in the king's court. They were to love and reverence Moses; but they rewarded him full evil[6] with threatenings and reproaches.

[1] "Hæc heroica animi magnitudo," this heroic magnanimity. [2] "Proterviam," petulance. [3] "Tacent omnes," they are all silent. [4] "Oppositis suis capitibus," by exposing their own heads. [5] "Nonnisi per populum stetisse quominus levationem aliquam citius sentiret," that it was owing entirely to the people themselves that they did not sooner obtain some alleviation. [6] "Atqui pessimam et iniquissimam mercedem reportat," but he receiveth a very bad and most iniquitous recompence, viz.

Furthermore, inasmuch as the fact was brought to the king's ears, we must needs impute that to the treachery of the people. Therefore, as when afterward the people could see the land of Canaan, they did through their own folly keep themselves from entering in; so now, refusing the grace of God in the person of one man, they cause the time of their deliverance to be deferred forty years. For although God had determined what he would do, yet those are justly blamed for the delay which hinder[1] Moses in his office.

Men, ye are brethren. There is, indeed, amongst men a general conjunction, so that they ought to use great courtesy one toward another, and to abstain from all injuries; but this is more unmeet and intolerable, when those hurt one another who are nearer linked together. Therefore, Moses doth not only use a general reason, that it may revoke[2] their minds which were desirous to do harm, but he mentioneth their kindred and fellowship of blood to mollify their cruelty. Yet all in vain; for he which had done injury to his neighbour doth forwardly thrust him from him, and addeth thereunto threatening. And this is a common thing amongst men; for an evil conscience doth drive men into fury, and the worse every man's cause is, the more boldly and cruelly doth he extol himself. But under what colour doth he which hath the worst cause set himself so stubbornly against Moses? He saith he is no judge; but he did not reprove them according to authority, but did only friendly admonish them. Is it the duty of a judge alone to admonish us when we do amiss? But this is a common vice, used of all stubborn and unruly persons, to give place to no admonitions, save only when they are enforced by violence and authority; yea, they are like frantic [phrenzied] men who rail upon[3] their physicians. For which cause we must be the more careful to bridle our lust, lest we run headlong with such blind fury against those which are desirous to cure our vices. Furthermore, we are taught

[1] "Impediunt ac turbant," impede and disturb. [2] "Quæ ad æquitatem revocet," which may call back or dispose to equity. [3] "Furiose impetunt," furiously assault.

by this example, that the servants of God cannot so do their duty in reproving such vices of men, but they shall suffer many injuries, offend many, and incur dangers; and chiefly when they do well, they shall surely hear evil. But they must swallow up the unworthiness of these evils,[1] that they may not therefore cease to do that which the Lord commanded them, and which he alloweth.[2] Moses is burdened here with a cruel false accusation that he usurpeth the authority of a ruler, and by this means they lay treason to his charge. Secondly, it is objected unto him reproachfully that he slew an Egyptian; both these were very odious. Whereby we may gather with how dangerous a temptation the mind of the holy man was stricken. And forasmuch as we see that he was neither discouraged by exile, neither by any other evils, so that it did not repent him of his well-doing, let us also learn by his example to bear a valiant and strong mind and courage against all such assaults of Satan.

30. *And when forty years were expired, there appeared unto him in the desert of Mount Sinai the angel of the Lord, in a flame of fire in a bush.*
31. *And so soon as Moses saw it, he wondered at the vision. Furthermore, when he drew near to consider, the voice of the Lord came unto him,*
32. *I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob; and Moses was afraid, and durst not draw near.*
33. *And the Lord said unto him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*
34. *In seeing, I have heard [seen] the affliction of my people in Egypt, and have heard their mourning, and I am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.*

30. *And when forty years were expired.* As Moses was no

[1] "Sed horum malorum indignitas illis est devoranda," but the indignity of these evils must be devoured by them, (overlooked or submitted to.)
[2] "Proinde ei probari," and is therefore approved by him.

blockish man,[1] every one of us may easily gather how many things might have come into his mind which might have caused him to mistrust his calling. The shifts and sleights of Satan are captious. We are more than bent naturally to distrustfulness;[2] what doubts soever arise in our minds concerning the word of God we do easily admit the same. It was a hard exchange to be thrust from earthly delights and a sumptuous life unto the painful and base office of feeding sheep; and especially forasmuch as Moses saw so much time spent, and being in the mean season sent into the wilderness, what other thing could he imagine with himself but that that was vain and a plain mock which the Lord had promised? Forasmuch as being now fourscore years of age, he was occupied about the feeding of his father-in-law's sheep, when could he have hoped that there should have been any use of him in delivering the people? It is good for us oftentimes to call to mind these combats of the godly until they be thoroughly imprinted in our memory, lest our minds faint, and our hearts fail us, if the Lord make us stay longer than we could wish. Again, Moses giveth a notable example of modesty, seeing that in all that time he attempteth nothing; he raiseth no tumults, neither intrudeth himself any way to bear rule, as troublesome men use to do; but employeth himself in his shepherd's function as diligently as if he should never have been called unto any greater charge. But whilst he tarrieth the Lord's leisure so patiently, he [the Lord] appeareth unto him at length.

The angel of the Lord appeared unto him. It is first demanded who this angel was? and, secondly, why he appeared in such a form? For after that Luke had called him an angel, he bringeth him in immediately speaking thus: *I am the God of Abraham, &c.* Some answer, As God doth sometimes attribute and impart unto his ministers those things which are most proper to himself, so it is no absurd or in-

[1] "Homo . . . stupidus," a stupid man. [2] "Nos ad diffidentiam natura plusquam propensi," we are by nature too prone to distrust.

convenient thing, if they have his name given them; but seeing this angel affirmeth manifestly that he is the eternal God, who alone is, and in whom all things have their being, we must needs restrain this title unto the essence of God; for it can by no means agree to the angels. It might be said more fitly, that because the angel speaketh in the name of the Lord, he taketh upon him his person, as if he declared his commandments word for word, as out of the mouth of God, which manner of speaking is usual in the prophets; but when Luke shall say afterwards, that this was the same angel through whose assistance and guiding Moses delivered the people: and Paul, in the 10th chapter of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. x. 4,) doth affirm that Christ was that guide, there is no cause why we should now wonder that the angel taketh to himself that which is proper to God alone.

Therefore, let us, first of all, set down this for a surety, that there was never since the beginning any communication between God and men, save only by Christ; for we have nothing to do with God, unless the Mediator be present to purchase his favour for us. Therefore, this place doth plentifully prove the divinity of Christ, and teacheth that he is of the same essence with the Father. Furthermore, he is called an angel, not only because he had the angels always to bear him company, and to be, as it were, his apparitors:[1] but because that deliverance of the people did shadow the redemption of us all, for whose sake Christ was to be sent of his Father, that he might take upon him the shape of a servant together with our flesh. It is certain, indeed, that God did never appear unto men as he is, but under some shape agreeable to their capacity; notwithstanding, there is another reason why Christ is called by this name, because he being appointed by the eternal counsel of God to be unto men the minister of salvation, doth appear unto Moses to this end. Neither is that contrary to this doctrine, which is written in the 2d chapter to the Hebrews, (Heb. ii. 16,) that Christ never took the angels, but the seed of Abraham;

[1] "Quasi apparitores," as it were his officers.

for although he took upon him the shape of an angel for a time, yet did he never take the nature of angels, as we know that he was made very man.

It resteth that we speak somewhat of the burning bush. That is common, that God doth apply the signs unto the things by a certain likelihood, and this is almost the common order and way of the sacraments. Furthermore, this was the fittest thing that could have been shown to Moses, to confirm his faith in the present business. He knew in what state he had left his nation. Although there were a greater[1] number of men, yet were they not unlike to a bush. For the thicker the bush is, and the more store of shrubs it hath,[2] the more subject is it to take fire, that it may burn on every side; so the people of Israel were but a weak band, and such as was laid open to all injuries; and this unwarlike multitude being pressed down even with their own weight, had incensed the cruelty of Pharaoh only with the prosperous success of increasing. Therefore, the people being oppressed with cruel tyranny, is, as it were, a pile of wood set on fire at every corner, neither is there any thing which keepeth it from being consumed to ashes, save this, because the Lord sitteth in the midst thereof; and although the [an] undoubted[3] fire of persecution did then burn, yet because the Church of God is never free from afflictions in the world, the continual estate thereof is after a sort painted out in this place. For what other thing are we but fuel for fire? And there fly abroad innumerable fire-brands of Satan continually, which set on fire both our bodies and also our minds; but the Lord delivereth and defendeth us, by his wonderful and singular goodness, from being consumed. Therefore, the fire must needs burn, that it may burn us in this life; but because the Lord dwelleth in the midst of us, he shall so preserve us that afflictions shall do us no harm, as it is also said in the 46th Psalm, (Psalm xlvi. 5.)

[1] "Ingens numerus," a vast number. [2] "Et compactis arbustis magis abundat," and the more numerous and compact its twigs are. [3] "Insolitus," unwonted.

31. *He wondered at the vision.* Let us know that God did use thus to deal with our fathers, that they might assuredly know his majesty; for he meant to make a manifest distinction between the visions which he showed, and the juggling casts of Satan. And this certainty is more necessary, for what credit should the oracles of God otherwise carry, wherein the covenant of eternal life is contained? Therefore, forasmuch as this alone is the true stay of faith, to have God to be the author thereof, that he may [he must needs] undoubtedly declare that it is he that speaketh. Again, forasmuch as Satan walketh about continually, and doth by many and strange shifts insinuate himself, and hath so many ways to deceive, and especially seeing he doth pretend the name of God craftily, we must take great heed of his mocks. We see how in times past he deluded all nations, and [how he deludes] the Papists also. For all the monsters of superstitions, all the dotings of errors which were in times past, and do as yet reign in Popery, did proceed from dreams, visions, and false revelations; yea, furthermore, even the Anabaptists have their illusions thence. Therefore, this is the only remedy that God do distinguish by certain marks those visions which he showeth; for then are we without danger of erring, when he hath revealed his majesty unto us. For this cause was the mind of Moses stricken with admiration, and then afterwards he draweth near to consider; after that he is come nearer, the Lord toucheth him with a more lively feeling of [I confess indeed] his presence, so that he is afraid. For I confess that there are none of all these things which Satan cannot imitate, yet falsely like an ape. And the Lord doth not only show himself by such signs, but helping our dulness, he doth also open our eyes that we may not be deceived. Again, the Holy Ghost doth imprint in our minds certain marks and tokens of God's presence, that there may no doubt remain.

32. *I am the God of thy fathers.* Now, we see to what end the vision was offered to Moses; to wit, that the word of God might have his [its] authority. For bare visions should do but

a little good, unless doctrine were joined therewithal; and it is joined with them not as an inferior part, but as the cause of all visions and the end. And whereas he calleth himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there is a double reason why he calleth himself so. As the majesty of God is infinite, if we will comprehend it, it doth rather swallow up our senses; if we endeavour to ascend unto it we vanish away; therefore, he adorneth himself with titles under which we may comprehend him. But we must mark that God maketh choice of such titles, as that he may by them call us back unto his word. For he is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for this cause, because he committed unto them the doctrine of salvation, that he might thereby be known to the world. But God had respect properly unto the present circumstance when he spake to Moses on this wise; for both this vision, and the hope of the delivery of the people, and the commandment which he was about to give to Moses, did depend upon the covenant which he had made in times past with the fathers. So that the suspicion of novelty is taken away, and the mind of Moses is lifted up to hope for redemption, which was grounded in the whole[1] promise.

Therefore, this title is as much as if God had said, I, which have promised in times past to your fathers, that I have a care of your safety, which have taken the kindred of Abraham to my tuition by a free covenant, yea, which have appointed this time for an end of your bondage, I appear now unto thee, that I may perform that which I promised, like as at this day all the promises of God must lean and be stayed upon this foundation, that they may be sure and certain to us, that God hath adopted us in Christ, and hath promised that he will be our God and our Father. And Christ gathereth out of this place by good reason, that the godly live after they be dead, (Matth. xxii. 32;) for if the whole man perish in death, this were an unfitting speech,[2] *I am the God of Abraham.* Let us suppose that there is no Rome, shall

[1] "In veteri," on the old. [2] "Inepta esset loquutio," the expression were inept.

not he be laughed at which shall call himself consul of Rome? For this is requisite in relation, that the members be answerable between themselves.[1] There is also another reason to be considered, that forasmuch as God hath in his hand both life and death, without all doubt he preserveth those alive whose father he will be, and whom he counteth his children; therefore, though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died, concerning the flesh, yet do they live in spirit with God.

And Moses being afraid. This might seem to be an absurd thing, that a voice full of consolation doth rather terrify Moses than make him glad; but it was good for Moses to be thus terrified with the presence of God, that he might frame himself unto the greater reverence; neither doth the voice of God alone strike his mind, but his majesty, whereof he saw a sign in the burning bush. And what marvel is it, if man be afraid when he seeth God? and especially let us remember that men's minds are by this means prepared unto fear and reverence, as in Exodus, (xx. 22,) "Thou hast seen signs, thou hast heard the sound of the trumpet, that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord." But some will say, Why dare not Moses now for fear consider, who was not afraid to draw near before? I answer, that the nearer we draw unto God, the more his glory doth appear, so are we the more afraid, and that by right. And God maketh Moses afraid for none other cause, save only that he may make him obedient unto him. This fear was a preparation not unfit for greater boldness; and to this end tendeth that which followeth, *Put off thy shoes from thy feet;* for he is admonished by this sign with reverence to receive the commandments of God, and to give him due glory by all means.

33. *Because the place wherein.* The Lord meant by this commendation which he giveth to the place, to lift up the mind of Moses into heaven, that he might not think upon any earthly thing. And if so be that Moses was to be pricked forward with so many pricks, that having forgotten

[1] "Hoc enim exigit relatio ut membra inter se respondeant," for relation requires that the members (related) correspond to each other.

the earth, he might hearken to God, must not we have our sides even, as it were, digged through,[1] seeing we are an hundred times more slow than he? Notwithstanding, here may a question be asked, how this place became so holy? for it was no more holy than other places before that day. I answer, that this honour is given to the presence of God, and not to the place, and that the holiness of the place is spoken of for man's sake. For if the presence of God do make the earth holy, how much more force thereof ought men to have?[2] Notwithstanding, we must also note, that the place was thus beautified only for a time, so that God did not fix his glory there, as Jacob erected an altar to God in Bethel, after that God had showed some token of his presence there, (Gen. xxxv. 7.) When as his posterity did imitate the same afterward, it was such worship as was reproved.[3] Finally, the place is called holy for Moses' sake only, that he may the better address himself to fear God and to obey him. Forasmuch as God doth now show himself unto us everywhere in Christ, and that in no obscure figures, but in the full light and perfect truth, we must not only put off our shoes from our feet, but strip ourselves stark-naked of ourselves.[4]

34. *In seeing I have seen.* God promiseth now that he will deliver his people, that he may appoint Moses to be his minister afresh, because the former objection was taken away by so long space of time. For God is said to see our miseries when he hath respect to us, and is careful for our safety; as he is said again to shut his eyes, and turn his back, when as he seemeth to set light by our cause. In like sort is he said to come down. He needeth not to move out of his place to help us, for his hand reacheth through-

[1] "Annon quasi fodiendi sumus," must not we be, as it were, stabbed.

[2] "Quanto majorem vim ab hominibus percipi æquium est," how much more forcibly ought man to feel it? [3] "Perversus cultus fuit," it was perverted worship. [4] "Sed nos totos exuere," but divest ourselves entirely.

out the heaven and earth; but this is referred unto our understanding. For, seeing that he did not deliver his people from their affliction, he might seem that he was afar off, and was busied about some other thing in heaven. Now he saith that the Israelites shall perceive that he is nigh unto them. The sum tendeth to this end, that Moses knowing the will of God, may not doubt to follow him as a guide, and the more boldly to employ himself about the delivery of the people, which he knew was the work of God. For we must note that he saith that he heard the mourning of the people. For although he hath respect unto those which are in misery and unjustly oppressed, yet when we lay our mournings and complaints in his lap, he is especially moved to have mercy; although this word may be taken for those blind and confused complaints which are not directed unto God, as it is taken oftentimes elsewhere.

35. *This Moses, whom they had denied, saying, Who made thee a ruler and judge? him, I say, hath God sent to be a ruler and a redeemer, in the hand of the angel which appeared unto him in the bush.*

36. *He brought them out, having showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.*

37. *This is Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, The Lord your God shall raise up unto you a Prophet, out of the midst of your brethren, like unto me; hear him.*

35. Stephen passeth over many things, because he maketh haste unto this sum, that the Jews may understand that the fathers were not delivered therefore, because they had deserved that with their godliness, but that this benefit was bestowed upon them, being altogether unworthy; and, secondly, that there is some more perfect thing to be hoped for of these beginnings. When Moses, being ordained of God to be their revenger and deliverer, was now in a readiness, they stopped the way before him; therefore God doth

deliver them now, as it were against their will. That which is added touching miracles and wonders, serveth as well to the setting forth of the grace of God, as to make known the calling of Moses. It is surely a strange thing, that God doth vouchsafe to declare his power by divers wonders, for such an unthankful people's sake. But in the mean season, he bringeth his servant in credit. Therefore, whereas the Jews set less by him afterward, whereas they essay sometimes to drive him away by railing, whereas they scold sometimes, sometimes murmur, sometimes set upon him outrageously, they bewray thereby both their wickedness, and also their contempt of the grace of God. Their unthankfulness and ungodliness was so increased always, that God must needs have striven with wonderful patience with such a froward and stubborn people.

A ruler and a deliverer. We must understand the contrarieties[1] which augment the fault. They would have obeyed Moses if a tyrant had appointed him to be a judge, but they contemn him proudly, and refuse him disdainfully, being appointed of God, and that to be a deliverer. Therefore, in despising him, they were wicked; and in rejecting grace, unthankful. And whereas Moses hath such an honourable title given him, God doth not so give and resign unto man that honour which is due to himself, that he loseth any whit of his authority thereby. For doubtless Moses was not called a redeemer or deliverer in any other respect, save only because he was the minister of God. And by this means the glory of the whole work remaineth in the power of God wholly. Therefore let us learn that so often as men have the titles which belong to God given them, God himself is not despoiled of his honour; but because the work is done by their hands, they are by this means commended. To this end tendeth that which Stephen saith, that this charge was committed to Moses in the hand of the angel. For by this means Moses is made subject to Christ, that under his conduct and direction he may

[1] "Subaudiendæ sunt antitheses," we must supply the antitheses.

obey God. For *hand* is taken in this place not for ministry, but for principality. Wherefore, God did so use the service of Moses, that the power of Christ did surpass him, as he is even at this day the chief governor, in accomplishing the salvation of the Church; yea, he useth the ministry of men in that sort, that the force and effect dependeth upon him alone.

37. *A Prophet shall God raise up.* Stephen endeavoureth undoubtedly to prove by these words that Christ is the end of the law; although he doth not express the same in plain words. And assuredly, (as we have already said,) Luke reciteth not word for word all those things which Stephen uttered; but it is sufficient for him to note the principal points of matters. Furthermore, we have said before, in the third chapter, that this testimony is so applied to Christ, that notwithstanding it agreeth to the other prophets also. For after that Moses had forbidden the people to be carried to and fro with the wicked superstitions of the Gentiles, he showeth what ought to follow. There is no cause (saith he) why thou shouldst desire magicians and enchanters; for God will never suffer thee to want prophets to teach thee faithfully. And now it is certain that the ministry of the prophets was temporal, as was also the ministry of the law; until Christ should bring the full perfection of wisdom into the world. Therefore Stephen's speech tendeth to this end, that Moses doth not keep the people fast bound to himself alone, when as he setteth before them and commendeth unto them another teacher. The prophets were, indeed, interpreters of the law, and all their doctrine was, as it were, an addition or appurtenance[1] of those things which were uttered by Moses; but forasmuch as this was also certain, that Christ should bring a more perfect kind of doctrine, because he should make an end of all the prophecies, it followeth, that he is made the chief; and that the principal mastership (that I may so call it) is his, lest

[1] "Appendix," an appendix.

the faith of the gospel should be doubtful. Now we know to what end Stephen intermingled Moses' testimony, to wit, that he may prove that the Jews did no less contemn him, (of whom they made boast with open mouth to be their only teacher,) even now when he is dead, than they did in times past, whilst he lived, wickedly and frowardly reject him. For whosoever believeth Moses, he will not refuse to be the disciple of Christ, whose messenger and crier he was, (John v. 46.) For the rest[1] out of the third chapter.

38. *This is he which was in the congregation in the wilderness, with the angel which had spoken unto him in mount Sinai,* [or did speak to him in the mount,] *and with our fathers; who received lively oracles, that he might give them to us:*

39. *Whom our fathers would not obey, but they refused him, and they turned back in their hearts into Egypt,*

40. *Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for we know not what is happened to this Moses which brought us out of the land of Egypt.*

41. *And they made a calf in those days, and they offered sacrifice to the idol, and they rejoiced over the works of their own hands.*

38. Stephen proceedeth to set forth the frowardness[2] of the people, who, though they were provoked [stirred up] with so many benefits of God, yet did they never cease maliciously to reject him. If they had been disobedient and unthankful to God before, yet this so wonderful a deliverance ought to have brought them into a better mind; but he declareth that they were always like themselves. It was meet that so many miracles should not only have stuck fast in their minds, but also have continued still before their eyes. But having forgotten all, they fly back suddenly unto the superstitions of Egypt. The memorial of their cruel servitude was yet fresh, which they had escaped by passing over the Red Sea; and yet they pre-

[1] "Reliqua pete," for the rest see.

[2] "Pravitate," depravity.

fer those tyrants by whom they were more than cruelly handled, before their deliverer. This was, therefore, a heap of ungodliness most desperate, that their stubbornness could not be broken or overcome with so many benefits of God, but that they did always return unto their nature. This doth greatly augment the greatness of the offence, where Stephen saith that Moses was then with them in the wilderness. For besides that there appeareth here rare goodness and long-sufferance of the Lord, in bearing with them, they make themselves to be without all excuse, whilst that being beset on every side with so many straits, being brought into so great distress, having Moses to be their guide in their journey, and the faithful keeper of their life, they fall away nevertheless treacherously from God. Finally, it appeareth that they were like untamed beasts, whom God could not keep in obedience with so many bands. Therefore, inasmuch as Moses left not off to govern them even through the wilderness, under the conduct and aid of the angel, it is an easy matter to gather by this circumstance of time, how incurable and obstinate their frowardness was; as it was a point of monstrous rebellion, not to be humbled with miseries,[1] and even with the very sight of death.

Whereas he saith, that Moses was with the angel and the fathers, there is a contrary respect.[2] He was present with the fathers, that he might be their guide according to the commandment of the Lord; he was with the angel as a minister. Whereupon it followeth that he was no private person to whom this injury was done, but it was done to the governance of God, when the people could be kept back, with the reverence of neither, from running headlong into wicked rebellion. We have already spoken of the angel. But the participle λαλουντος, or, *which spake*, hath a double meaning. For it may be understood either of the first vision, whereby Moses was called to redeem the people, or of that speech which God

[1] "Tot malis," so many miseries. [2] "Longe diversa est ratio," the explanation (of the two things) is very different.

had with Moses, after they were come over the Red Sea. And because Christ declared both ways, that he was the author of their deliverance, it is no great matter whether we choose; yea, there is no let but that it may be extended unto both. For he which began to speak to Moses from the beginning, that he might send him into Egypt, did continue the tenor of his speech afterward, until the work was finished.

Which received lively oracles. Erasmus translated it *lively speech;* but those which are expert in the Greek tongue, they shall know that I have more truly translated the words of Stephen. For there is greater majesty in Oracles than in Speech. I speak only of the word; for I know that whatsoever proceedeth out of the mouth of God, the same is an oracle. Moreover, he purchaseth authority for the doctrine of Moses in these words, because he uttereth nothing but that which proceeded from God. Whereupon it followeth, that they did not so much rebel against Moses as against God; whereby their stubbornness [1] is more discovered. And this is a general way to establish doctrine, when men teach nothing but that which is commanded them by God. For what man dare make Moses inferior to him, who (as the Spirit affirmeth) ought only to be believed for this cause, because he faithfully unfolded and delivered the doctrine which he had received of God? But some men may ask this question, Why he called the law a living speech? For this title seemeth to disagree much with the words of Paul, where he saith that the law is the ministry of death, and that it worketh death, and that it is the strength of sin, (1 Cor. iii. 7.) If you take lively speech for that which is effectual, and cannot be made frustrate by the contempt of men, there shall be no contrariety; but I interpret it as spoken actively, for that which maketh to live.[2] For seeing that the law is the perfect rule of godly and holy life, and it showeth the righteous-

[1] "Ferrea improbitas," their stubborn wickedness. [2] "Vivifica," vivifying.

ness of God, it is counted, for good causes, the doctrine of life and salvation. And to this purpose serveth that solemn protestation of Moses, when he calleth heaven and earth to witness, that he hath set before them the way of death and life. In which sense the Lord himself complaineth, that his good law is broken, and his good commandments, whereof he had said, "He which shall do these things shall live in them," (Ezek. xx.) Therefore the law hath life in itself. Yet if any man had liefer take *living* for that which is full of efficacy and strength, I will not greatly stand in contention.

And whereas it is called the ministry of death, that is accidental to it, because of the corrupt nature of man; for it doth not engender sin, but it findeth it in us. It offered life, but we, which are altogether corrupt, can have nothing but death by it. Therefore, it is deadly in respect of men alone. Though Stephen had respect unto a farther thing in this place; for he doth not only speak of the bare commandments, but comprehendeth all Moses' doctrine, wherein the free promises are included, and so, consequently, Christ himself, who is the only life and health of men. We must remember with what men Stephen had to do. They were such as were preposterously zealous of the law, who stayed only in the dead and deadly letter of the law; and, in the mean season, they raged against Stephen, because he sought Christ in the law, who is, indeed, the soul thereof. Therefore, by touching their perverse ignorance glancingly, he giveth them to understand that there is some greater and some more excellent thing hidden in the law than they have hitherto known. For as they were carnal, and content with an outward show, they sought no spiritual thing in it, yea, they would not so much as suffer the same to be showed them.

That he might give them to us. This serveth to refute the false accusation wherewith he was falsely burthened. For seeing he submitteth his neck to the yoke of the law, and professeth that he is one of Moses' scholars, he is far from discrediting him amongst others. Yea, rather he

turneth back the fault which was laid to his charge upon those which were the authors of the slander. That was, as it were, a common reproach for all the people, because the fathers would not obey the law. And therewithal he telleth them that Moses was appointed to be a prophet, not only for his time, but that his authority might be in force with the posterity, even when he was dead. For it is not meet that the doctrine of God should be extinguished together with ministers, or that it should be taken away. For what is more unlikely[1] than that that should die whereby we have immortality? So must we think at this day. As the prophets and apostles spake unto the men of their time, so did they write unto us, and (that) the force of their doctrine is continual, because it hath rather God to be the author thereof than men. In the mean season, he teacheth that if any reject the word appointed for them, they reject the counsel of God.

39. *They refused, and were turned away.* He saith that the fathers rejected Moses; and he showeth the cause also, because they gave themselves rather unto the superstitions of Egypt; which was horrible, and more than blind fury, to desire the customs and ordinances of Egypt, where they had suffered such grievous things of late. He saith that they *were turned away* into Egypt in their hearts; not that they desired to return thither, (bodily,) but because they returned in mind unto those corruptions, which they ought not so much as to have remembered without great detestation and hatred. It is true, indeed, that the Jews did once speak of returning; but Stephen toucheth not that history now. Furthermore, he doth rather express their stubbornness, when he saith that they were turned away. For after that they had taken the right way, having God for their guide and governor, they start aside suddenly, as if a stubborn unbroken horse, not obeying his rider, should frowardly run backward.

[1] "Minus consentaneum," less befitting.

40. *Make us.* Though the Jews be turned back divers ways, yet Stephen maketh choice of one notable example above all the rest, of their filthy and detestable treachery, to wit, when they made themselves a calf, that they might worship it instead of God. For there can no more filthy thing be invented [1] than this their unthankfulness. They confess that they were delivered out of Egypt; neither do they deny that this was done by the grace of God and the ministry of Moses; yet, notwithstanding, they reject the author of so great goodness, together with the minister. And under what colour? They pretend they cannot tell what is become of Moses. But they know full well that he is in the mount. They saw him with their eyes when he went up thither, until such time as the Lord took him unto himself, by compassing him about with a cloud. Again, they know that Moses is absent for their health's sake, who had promised that he would return, and bring unto them the law which God should give. He bade them only be quiet a while. They raise mad uproars suddenly within a small time, and without any cause; yet to the end they may cover their madness with the colour of some reason, they will have gods present with them, as if God had showed unto them no token of his presence hitherto; but his glory did appear daily in the cloud and pillar of fire. Therefore we see what haste they make to commit idolatry through wicked contempt of God, that I may, in the mean season, omit to declare how filthy and wicked their unthankfulness was, in that they had so soon forgotten those miracles which they ought to have remembered even until the end of the world. Therefore, by this one backsliding, it appeareth sufficiently what a stubborn and rebellious people they were.

Moreover, it was more expedient for the cause which Stephen had in hand, to recite this history of their rebellion than the other.[2] For the people doth quite overthrow

[1] "Nihil...fingi potest," nothing can be imagined.

[2] "Quam alias referri," than to refer to any other.

the worship of God; they refuse the doctrine of the law; they bring in a strange and profane religion. And this is a notable place, because it pointeth out the fountain from which all manner of superstitions did flow since the beginning, and especially what was the first beginning of making idols; to wit, because man, which is carnal, will, notwithstanding, have God present with him, according to the capacity of his flesh. This is the cause why men were so bold in all ages to make idols.[1] And God doth, indeed, apply[2] himself to our rudeness thus far, that he showeth himself visible, after a sort, under figures; for there were many signs under the law to testify his presence. And he cometh down unto us, even at this day, by baptism and the supper, and also by the external preaching of the word. But men offend two manner of ways in this; for, first, being not content with the means which God hath appointed, they boldly get to themselves new means. This is no small fault, because their fingers itch always to have new inventions without keeping any mean, and so they are not afraid to pass the bounds which God hath appointed them. But there can be no true image of God, save that which he appointed. Therefore, what images soever are feigned and invented by man besides his word, they are false and corrupt.

There is also another vice no less intolerable, that as man's mind conceiveth nothing of God but that which is gross and earthly, so it translateth all tokens of God's presence unto the same grossness. Neither doth man delight in those idols only which he himself hath made, but also doth corrupt whatsoever God hath ordained, by wresting it unto a contrary end. God cometh down unto us, indeed, as I have already said, but to this end, that he may lift us up into heaven with him. But we, because we are wholly set upon the earth, will, in like sort, have him in the earth. By this means is his heavenly glory deformed, and that

[1] "Tanta in fingendis idolis, hominum lascivia fuerit," there was such wantonness in men in forming idols. [2] "Accommodat," accommodate.

fulfilled altogether which the Israelites say here, *Make us gods.* For whosoever he be that doth not worship God spiritually, he maketh unto himself a new god; and yet if ye thoroughly weigh all things, the Israelites will not have a god made of set purpose by them, but they think rather that they have the true and eternal God under the shape of the golden calf. For they are ready to offer the appointed sacrifice, and they approve that with their consent which Aaron saith, that those are the gods by whom they were brought out of Egypt. But God passeth not for those frivolous imaginations; but he complaineth that men put strange gods in his place, so soon as they depart even a very little from his word.

41. *And they made a calf.* We may easily gather by that which goeth before, why they were more delighted in that figure than in any other. For although Egypt did swarm with innumerable idols, yet it is well known that they made the greatest account of an ox. And whence is it that they are so desirous to have an idol, save only because they were turned back into Egypt, as Stephen hath already said? We must note the speech when he saith that they offered sacrifice to the idol. Aaron commandeth the people to assemble themselves together to worship God; they come all together. Therefore they testify that they mean nothing less [any thing rather] than to defraud God of his worship, howsoever they translate the same unto the calf; yea, rather, they are determined to worship God in the image of the calf. But because they forsook the true God, by making an idol, whatsoever followeth afterward it is judged to be given to the idol, because God refuseth all wicked worshipping. For it is not meet to account that as bestowed upon him which he hath not commanded; and because he forbids them expressly to erect any visible image unto him, that is mere sacrilege whatsoever is done afterward in honour thereof.

They rejoiced over the works. This speech is taken out of Isaiah, yea, out of the prophets, who, in like sort, upbraid unto the Jews that they were delighted in their own in-

ventions. And surely it is wonderful madness, when men arrogate unto themselves anything in God's matters. I take this rejoicing to be that solemn dancing whereof Moses speaketh, in the thirty-second chapter of Exodus. Yet Stephen toucheth a common vice, wherewith idolaters are infected. For although it be altogether unlawful for men to attempt anything in religion which God hath not appointed, yet do they invent everything unadvisedly, and setting light by the Word of God, they make choice of the works of their own hands; but Stephen showeth that while they take such pleasure in this liberty, they displease God so much the more. But if we will have God to allow our worship, we must abstain from the works of our hands, that is, from our own inventions; for all that which men invent of themselves is nothing else but sacrilegious profanation. The idol is properly so called reproachfully, as it were a thing nothing worth, because no reason doth suffer man to make God.[1]

42. *And God turned himself, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven: as it is written in the book of the prophets, Have ye offered unto me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness, O ye house of Israel?*

43. *And ye took to you the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, and figures which ye made to worship them; therefore I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*

Stephen will here declare that the Jews did never make an end of sinning, but that they wandered farther in their froward errors; so that that first fall of theirs was unto them as it were an entrance into a labyrinth. And this doth he assign unto the just vengeance of God, that after that time their madness grew so, that they gat for one idol

[1] "Deum...fabricari," to fabricate a god.

infinity. This example teacheth us to be careful to follow the rule which God hath set down; because, so soon as we are turned even but a little aside from the same, we must needs be carried to and fro with divers dotings, we must needs be entangled in many superstitions, and be utterly drowned in the huge sink of errors; which punishment God in justice layeth upon men which refuse to obey his word. Therefore Stephen saith that God was turned away; which word imported as much as if he should say, that he turned his back. For he had fastened his eyes after a sort upon the people, when he showed his singular care which he took in governing them; being offended with their falling away, now he turneth his face another way.

We may also hereby gather that we can no otherwise follow the right way, save only when the Lord watcheth over us to govern us; but so soon as his face is turned away, we run by and by into errors. The Israelites were forsaken of God even then when they made the calf; but Stephen meant to express the greatness of the punishment, as if he should have said, that they were altogether cast off into a reprobate sense then; as Paul also teacheth, that those which gave not glory to God when he had showed himself unto them, were, by the just judgment of God, given up unto blindness and blockishness, and unto shameful lusts, (Rom. i. 28.) Hereby it came to pass, that after that religion began to be corrupt, innumerable abominations succeeded a few superstitions, and gross monsters of idolatry came in place of light corruptions. For because men neglected the light which was set before them, they became altogether blockish by the just judgment of God, so that they had no more judgment than brute beasts. Idolatry surely is very fertile, that of one feigned god there should by and by come an hundred, that a thousand superstitions should flow from one. But this so great madness of men springeth hence, because God revengeth himself by delivering them to Satan; because, after he hath once

taken in hand to govern us, there is no change in his part, but he is plucked away[1] from us by our rash lightness.

Have ye offered unto me slain beasts and sacrifices? This place is taken out of the fifth chapter of Amos, (Amos v. 25.) The speech which Stephen useth showeth that all the prophecies were gathered into one body; and Amos addeth, (after that he had inveighed against the idolatry and sundry sins of the people,) that this is no new evil, that the Jews are rebellious against God, because their fathers had fallen away from true godliness even in the wilderness. Furthermore, he denieth that they offered slain beasts to him, not because there were there no sacrifices at all, but because God refused their corrupt worship; like as he reproveth and chideth the people in Isaiah, because they honoured him with no sacrifice, "Thou," (saith he,) "O Jacob, hast not called upon me, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices, neither have I made thee serve in offering or incense. Thou hast not bought for me calamus, neither hast thou filled me with fatness. But thou hast been burdenous [burdensome] unto me in thy sins, and hast caused me to serve in thine iniquities," (Isaiah xliii. 22.) Assuredly the Jews did all these things daily, but God accepteth not the obedience of the wicked, neither doth he approve the same. Again, he abhorreth all that which is polluted with such mingle-mangles as are added.[2] Thus doth Amos speak of the fathers which were revolts.[3] That which is added forthwith may be referred either unto them or unto their posterity.

43. *You took to you the tabernacle of Moloch.* Some take the copulative for the adversative [particle,] as if he should say, Yea, rather, ye worshipped the idol. It may be resolved also into the conjunction causal, thus, You did not

[1] "Distrahitur," torn asunder, withdrawn. [2] "Adventitiæ mixturæ," adventitious mixtures. [3] "De patribus apostatis," of the apostate fathers.

offer sacrifices to me, because ye erected a tabernacle to Moloch. But I expound it somewhat otherwise, to wit, that God doth first accuse the fathers for the more vehemency; and then afterwards he addeth, that their posterity did increase the superstitions, because they gat to themselves new and diverse idols; as if the prophet had spoken thus in the person of God, If I shall rip up from the beginning, (O house of Jacob,) how your kindred hath behaved itself toward me; your fathers began to overthrow and corrupt, even in the wilderness, that worship which I had commanded; but you have far passed their ungodliness, for you have brought in an infinite company of gods. And this order is fitter for Stephen's purpose; for he intendeth to prove, (as we have already said,) that after the Israelites fell away unto strange and bastardly rites, they never made an end of sinning, but being stricken with blindness, they polluted themselves every now and then with new idolatries, until they were come even unto the last end[1] of impiety. Therefore, Stephen confirmeth this sentence fitly with the testimony of the prophet, that the Jews, descending of wicked and rebellious fathers, had never ceased to wax worse and worse. And although the prophet's words be somewhat unlike to these, yet is the sense all one. It is to be thought that Stephen, who had to deal with the Jews, did repeat word for word in their tongue that which is in the prophet; Luke, who wrote in Greek, did follow the Greek interpreter. The prophet saith, Ye honoured Succoth your king, and Chiun your image, the star of your gods. The Greek interpreter made a noun common of a noun proper, because of the alliance[2] of the word *Succoth*, which signifieth *a tabernacle*. Furthermore, I cannot tell whence he fetcheth that his Remphan, unless it were because that word was more used in that time.

And figures which ye made. The word image, which is in the prophet, doth of itself signify no evil thing. Moreover, the word τυπος is taken amongst the Grecians in good part.

1 "Ad extremum," to the extreme. 2 "Affinitatem," its affinity to.

For the ceremonies which God appointed are called τυποι; notwithstanding the prophet condemneth expressly the figures [types] which the Jews had made. Why so? Because God will not be worshipped under a visible and external form. If any man object that he speaketh in this place of stars; that is true, I confess; but I stand only upon this, that although the prophet doth give their idols some honest name, yet doth he sharply condemn their corrupt worship; whereby the foolish and childish cavilling of the Papists is refuted. Because they deny that those images which they worship are idols, they say, that that mad worship of theirs is εικονοδουλεια, or serving of images, and not ειδωλοδουλεια, or worshipping of idols. Seeing they mock God sophistically, there is no man that is endued even but with common understanding, which doth not see that they are more than ridiculous even in such toys. For although I move no question about the word, it is certain that the word τυπος is more honourable than εικων. But those same τυποι, or figures, are simply condemned in this place, which men make to themselves, not only προς την λατρειαν, or that they may worship them, but προς την προσκυνησιν, that is, that they may give them even any reverence at all. Therefore that filthy distinction falleth flat to the ground, wherein the Papists think they have a crafty starting-hole.[1]

Beyond Babylon. The prophet nameth Damascus; neither doth the Greek interpretation dissent from the same. Wherefore it may be that the word Babylon cropt [crept] in here through error; though in the sum of the thing there be no great difference. The Israelites were to be carried away to Babylon; but because they thought that they had a sure and strong fortress in the kingdom of Syria, whose head Damascus was, therefore the prophet saith that Damascus shall not help them, but that God shall drive them farther; as if he should say, So long as you have Damascus set against your enemies, you think that you are well fenced; but God shall carry you away beyond it; even into Assyria and Chaldea.

[1] "Effugium, evasion.

44. *Our fathers had the testimony of witness in the wilderness, like as he had appointed, speaking to Moses, that he should make it according to the form which he had seen :*
45. *Which tabernacle our fathers which succeeded brought with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, which God drove out before the face of our fathers, until the days of David ;*
46. *Who found favour before God, and desired that he might find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.*
47. *But Solomon built him an house.*
48. *But the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; as the prophet saith,*
49. *Heaven is my seat, and the earth is my footstool. What house will ye build for me ? saith the Lord ; or what place is it that I should rest in ?*
50. *Hath not my hand made all these things ?*

44. *The tabernacle of witness.* Stephen showeth here that the blame cannot be laid upon God, because the Jews polluted themselves with divers superstitions, as if God had suffered them to wander freely.[1] For he saith that God had commanded how he would be worshipped by them. Whereupon it followeth that they were entangled in so many errors, because they would not follow that form which God had appointed. Although he girdeth [reprehendeth] them for two causes: Because, being not content with that rule alone which God had prescribed, they invented to themselves strange worships; secondly, because they had no respect unto the right end of the temple, and of the ceremonies which God had appointed. For whereas they ought to have been unto them exercises of the spiritual worship, they apprehended nothing but that which was carnal, according to their carnal nature;[2] that is, they took the shadow for the body.

Therefore we see that the Jews were first reprehended for their boldness, for because that being not content with

1 "Sine freno," without a curb. 2 "Pro crasso suo ingenio nihil nisi terrenum et carnale apprehenderent," in accordance with their gross disposition, they apprehended nothing but what was earthly and carnal.

the plain word of God, they were carried away after their own inventions. Secondly, they are reproved for the preposterous abuse of the true and sincere worship; because they followed the flesh instead of the Spirit. They had, saith he, *the tabernacle of witness.* Therefore it was their own wantonness and rashness only which caused them to sin. For seeing they were well taught what was the right way and order of worshipping God, all cloak and colour of ignorance was taken away.

Which thing is worth the noting. For seeing God doth after a sort bridle us, when he maketh his will known unto us, if after we have received his commandment we turn aside, either unto the right hand or to the left, we be twice guilty; because the servant which knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall suffer more stripes. This is the first mark whereby the Holy Spirit doth distinguish all bastardly and corrupt worshippings from the true and sincere worship. Yea, (to speak more briefly,) the first difference between true worship and idolatry is this: when the godly take in hand nothing but that which is agreeable to the Word of God, but the other think all that lawful which pleaseth themselves, and so they count their own will a law; whereas God alloweth nothing but that which he himself hath appointed. To this end serveth the word *witness.*

The Hebrew word מוֹעֵד (*moed*) signifieth, indeed, an appointed place and time, or an assembly of men; but the reason expressed in Moses showeth that there is another cause why it is so named. For in Moses this is oftentimes repeated, "I will meet with you there." Therefore the tabernacle was consecrated by the covenant and the word of the Lord, and his voice was heard there continually, that it might be distinguished from all profane places.

According to the form which he had seen. This is referred unto the second point which I have touched; for it may be that he which shall use the ceremonies only which God appointed, shall notwithstanding worship God amiss. For God careth not for external rites, save only inasmuch as they are

tokens of the heavenly truth; therefore God would have the tabernacle to be made like unto the heavenly figure,[1] that the Jews might know that they were not to stay still in the external figures. Furthermore, let him which is disposed read my Commentaries upon the Epistle to the Hebrews, and he shall see what that figure, whereof mention is made Exodus xxv., (Exodus xxv. 40; Hebrews viii. 5,) did signify. Stephen doth only briefly tell them in this place that the worship which God commanded the Jews is spiritual, and that they, according to their carnal blockishness, were evil and false interpreters; therefore, as we have said, that God alloweth no worship but that which is grounded in his commandment, so we are taught here that it is requisite in the right use of the commandment, that the spiritual truth be present; which thing being granted, it was the like question which we said did consist principally in this issue, whether the shadows ought to yield to the body or not. Whereas Moses is said to have seen a form or figure, the Spirit of God signifieth thereby that it is unlawful for us to invent forms at our pleasure; but that all our senses must be set upon that form which God showeth, that all our religion may be formed according to it. The word *figure* signifieth here, in this place, the principal pattern,[2] which is nothing else but the spiritual truth.

45. *Which they brought in.* This serveth to increase the frowardness[3] of the nation, that whereas the tabernacle did continue with them, and they carried the same whithersoever they went, yet could they not be kept within the bounds of God's covenant, but they would have strange and profane rites; to wit, declaring that God dwelt amidst them, from whom they were so far distant, and whom *they* did drive out of that inheritance which *he* had given them. To this purpose serveth that also, that God did beautify the tabernacle with divers miracles; for the worthiness thereof[4]

[1] "Archetypum," archetype, model, primary pattern, the original model.
[2] "Primarium exemplar," the
[3] "Pervicaciam," perverseness.
[4] "Illius dignitas," its dignity.

was established by those victories which the Jews had gotten, as it appeareth by divers places of the holy history; therefore, it must needs be that they were very disobedient, which did not cease oftentimes to start aside from that worship which was so many ways approved.

Until the days of David. Although the ark of the Lord continued long in Shiloh, yet it had no certain place until the reign of David, (1 Sam. i. 3;) for it was unlawful for men to erect a place for the same, but it was to be placed in that place which the Lord had showed, as Moses saith oftentimes. Neither durst David himself, after he had taken it from the enemies, bring it into the thrashing-floor of Araunah until the Lord had declared, by an angel from heaven, that that was the place which he had chosen, (2 Sam. xxiv. 16.) And Stephen counteth this a singular benefit of God, not without great cause, that the place was showed to David wherein the Israelites should hereafter worship God; as in the Psalm he rejoiceth as over some notable thing: "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord; our feet shall be stable in thy courts, O Jerusalem," (Psalm cxxxii. 3.) The priesthood was coupled with the kingdom; therefore, the stability of the kingdom is showed in the resting of the ark; therefore it is said that he desired this so earnestly that he bound himself with a solemn vow, that he would not come within his house, that his eyes should enjoy no sleep, nor his temples any rest, until he should know a place for the Lord, and a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. Furthermore, the place was showed to David, but it was granted to Solomon to build the temple, (1 Kings v. 7.)

47. *Solomon built.* Stephen seemeth to gird Solomon glancingly[1] in this place, as if he did not regard the nature of God in building the temple; yet did he attempt that work not without the commandment of God. There was also a promise added, wherein God did testify that he would be present with his people there. I answer, that when Stephen

[1] "Videtur hic oblique Stephanus Solomonem perstringere," Stephen here seemeth indirectly to rebuke Solomon.

denieth that God dwelleth in temples made with hands, that is not referred unto Solomon, who knew full well that God was to be sought in heaven, and that men's minds must be lifted up thither by faith; which thing he uttered also in that solemn prayer which he made: "The heaven of heavens do not contain thee, and how much less this house?" (1 Kings viii. 23;) but he reproveth the blockishness of the people, which abused the temple, as if it had had God tied to it; which appeareth more plainly by the testimony of Isaiah, (Isaiah vi. 6,) which he citeth also; God, saith he, would have Solomon to build him a temple; but they were greatly deceived who thought that he was, as it were, included in such a building; as he complaineth by his prophet that the people do him injury, when as they imagine that he is tied to a place; but the prophet doth not for that cause only inveigh against the Jews, because they worshipped God superstitiously, thinking that his power was tied to the temple, but because they did esteem him according to their own affection, and, therefore, after that they had ended[1] their sacrifices and external pomp, they imagined that he was pleased, and that they had brought him indebted to them. This was almost a common error in all ages, because men thought that cold ceremonies were sufficient enough for the worship of God. The reason is, because forasmuch as they are carnal, and wholly set upon the world, they imagine that God is like to them; therefore, to the end God may take from them this blockishness, he saith that he *filleth all things.*

49. For whereas he saith, that *heaven is his seat, and the earth his footstool,* it must not be so understood as if he had a body, or could be divided into parts, after the manner of men; but because he is infinite, therefore he saith that he cannot be comprehended within any spaces of place; therefore, those men are deceived who esteem God or his worship according to their own nature; and because the prophet had to deal with hypocrites, he doth not only dispute about the

[1] "Defuncti sunt," performed.

essence of God, but also teacheth generally, that he is far unlike to men, and that he is not moved with the vain pomp of this world as they are. Here ariseth that question also, why the prophet saith that the Lord hath no place of rest in the world, whereas, notwithstanding, the Spirit affirmeth the contrary elsewhere, "This is my rest for ever," (Psalm cxxxii. 14.) Moreover, Isaiah doth adorn the Church with this self-same title, that it is the glorious rest of God, alluding unto the temple. I answer, that when God appointed signs of his presence in the temple, and sacrifices in times past, he did not this to the end he might settle and fasten himself and his power there; therefore, the Israelites did wickedly, who, setting their minds wholly upon the signs, did forge to themselves an earthly God. They dealt also ungodly, who under this colour took to themselves liberty to sin, as if they could readily and easily pacify God with bare ceremonies. Thus doth the world use to mock God.

When God doth declare, by the external rites, that he will be present with his, that he may dwell in the midst of them, he commandeth them to lift up their minds, that they may seek him spiritually. Hypocrites, which are entangled in the world, will rather pluck God out of heaven; and whereas they have nothing but vain and bare figures, they are puffed up with such foolish confidence, that they pamper themselves in their sins carelessly; so, at this day, the Papists include Christ in the bread and wine in their imagination; that done, so soon as they have worshipped their idol with a foolish worship, they vaunt and crack as if they were as holy as angels. We must diligently note these two vices, that men do superstitiously forge to themselves a carnal and worldly God which doth so come down unto them, that they remain still having their minds set upon the earth, and that they rise not up in mind to heaven. Again, they dream that God is pacified with frivolous obedience; hereby it cometh to pass, that they are besotted in the visible signs; and, secondly, that[1] they go about to bring God indebted to them

[1] "Neglecta pietate," neglecting piety, omitted.

after a childish manner, and with things which be nothing worth.

Now we understand in what sense the prophet saith that God hath no place of rest in the world. He would, indeed, that the temple should have been a sign and pledge of his presence, yet only to the godly, which did ascend into heaven in heart, which did worship him spiritually with pure faith; but he hath no place of rest with the superstitious, who, through their foolish inventions, tie him unto the elements of the world, or do erect unto him an earthly worship; neither yet with hypocrites, who are puffed up with drunken confidence, as if they had done their duty towards God well, after that they have played in their toys. In sum, the promise received by faith doth cause God to hear us in his temple, as if he were present to show forth his power in the sacraments; but unless we rise up unto him by faith, we shall have no presence of his. Hereby we may easily gather, that when he dwelleth amidst those that be his, he is neither tied to the earth, neither comprehended in any place, because they seek him spiritually in heaven.

50. *Hath not mine hand?* The prophet telleth the people in these words, that God hath no need either of gold, either of precious furniture of the temple, either of the sacrifices; whereupon it followeth that his true worship is not contained in ceremonies. For he desireth none of all these things which we offer unto him, for his own sake, but only that he may exercise us in the study of godliness; which argument is handled more at large, Psalm l. For although this be a shameful foolishness to go about to feed God with sacrifices, yet unless hypocrites were drowned in the same, they would make no such account of toys, because all that is unsavoury before God which dissenteth from the spiritual worship; therefore, let us know that God seeketh us and not ours, which we have only at pleasure; and hereby it appeareth also what great difference there is between true religion and the carnal inventions of men.

51. *You stiff-necked, and of an uncircumcised heart and ears, ye have always resisted the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.*

52. *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain those which foretold of the coming of the Just; of whom you are now made the betrayers and murderers:*

53. *Who have received the law in the dispositions of angels, and have not kept it.*

51. Forasmuch as Stephen doth not expressly answer the points of the accusation, I am of their mind who think that he would have said more, if his oration had not been broken off with some uproar. For we know what a session of judges he had; therefore, no marvel if they enforced him to hold his peace with noise and outcries. And we see, also, that he did use long insinuation of set purpose, that he might tame and appease them who were like brute beasts most cruel; but it is likely that their madness was then incensed, when he proved that they had most wickedly corrupted the law, that the temple was polluted with their superstitions, and that there is nothing sincere amongst them; because, whilst they did stick in bare figures, they did not worship God spiritually, because they did not refer the ceremonies unto the heavenly figure; but though Stephen did not enter the cause straightway, but essayed to make their fierce minds somewhat more gentle by little and little, yet did he reason very fitly, to purge himself of the crime laid to his charge.

These two things, as we have said, were the principal points of the question, that Stephen had blasphemed God and his temple; that he went about to disannul the law. That Stephen might clear himself of both these false slanders, he began at the calling of Abraham, and declareth that the Jews excelled the Gentiles, not of their own nature, not by any right of their own, not by any merits of works, but by a free privilege, because God had adopted them in the person of Abraham. This is also very pertinent to the cause, that the covenant of salvation was made with Abraham before any temple or ceremonies were, yea, before circumcision was

appointed. Of which things the Jews did so boast, that they said there was no worship of God without them, neither any holiness. After that he set down how wonderful and manifold the goodness of God was towards Abraham's stock, and again how wickedly and frowardly they had refused, so much as in them lay, the grace of God; whereby it appeareth that it cannot be ascribed to their own merits that they are counted God's people, but because God did choose them of his own accord, being unworthy, and did not cease to do them good, though they were most unthankful. Their lofty and proud spirits might by this means have been subdued, tamed, and humbled, that being emptied of that wind of foolish glory they might come unto the Mediator. Thirdly, he declared that the Angel was the governor and chief, in giving the law and delivering the people, and that Moses did so serve in his function, that he taught that there should come other prophets hereafter, who should, notwithstanding, have one which should be the chief of them, that he might make an end of all prophecies, and that he might bring the perfect accomplishment of them all. Whereby it is gathered that those are nothing less than Moses' disciples, who reject that kind of doctrine which was promised and commended in the law, together with the author thereof.

Last of all, he showeth that all the old worship which was prescribed by Moses is not to be esteemed of itself, but that it ought rather to be referred to another end, because it was made according to the heavenly pattern; and that the Jews have always been wicked interpreters of the law, because they conceived nothing but that which was earthly. Hereby is it proved that there is no injury done to the temple and the law when Christ is made, as it were, the end and truth of both. But because the state of the cause did consist chiefly in this, that the worship of God doth not properly consist in sacrifices and other things, and that all ceremonies did nothing else but shadow Christ, Stephen was purposed to stand upon this point if the Jews would have permitted him; but because, when he was come to the pith of the matter, they cannot abide to hear any more,

(they were so incensed with fury,) the application of those things which he had said, unto this cause which he had in hand, is wanting. And he is enforced to use a sharp reprehension for a conclusion, *Ye of an hard neck*, saith he, (Exod. xxxii. 9 ; xxxiii. 3, 5.) We see how soon he is offended with them with an holy zeal; but because he saw that he spake many things to small end, especially before deaf men, he breaketh off his doctrine. This is a metaphor taken from horses or oxen, which Moses useth often, when he will say that his people is a rebellious people, and disobedient to God, and also unruly.

The upbraiding which followeth was of greater force with them. Circumcision was unto them a vail and covering to cover all vices. Therefore, when he calleth them uncircumcised in heart, he doth not only mean that they are rebellious against God and stubborn, but that they were found treacherous and covenant-breakers, even in that sign whereof they did so greatly boast; and so he turneth that back most fitly to their shame, whereof they made boast to their glory. For this is all one, as if he should have said that they had broken the covenant of the Lord, so that their circumcision was void and profane. This speech is taken out of the law and the prophets. For as God hath appointed the sign, so he would have the Jews know to what end they were circumcised; to wit, that they might circumcise their hearts and all their corrupt affections to the Lord, as we read, "And now circumcise your hearts to the Lord." Wherefore, the letter of circumcision, as Paul calleth it, is a vain visor with God, (Rom. ii. 28.) So, forasmuch as at this day the spiritual washing is the truth of our baptism, it is to be feared, lest that may well be objected to us, that we are not partakers of baptism, because our souls and flesh are polluted with filthiness.

Ye have always resisted. At the first Stephen vouchsafed to call these men fathers and brethren, against whom he inveigheth thus sharply. Therefore, so long as there remained any hope that they might be made more gentle, he dealt not only friendly with them, but he spake honourably

unto them. Now, so soon as he espieth their desperate stubbornness, he doth not only take from them all honour, but lest he should have any fellowship with them, he speaketh unto them as unto men of another kindred. You, saith he, are like to your fathers, who have always rebelled against the Spirit of God. But he himself came of the same fathers; and yet that he may couple himself to Christ, he forgetteth his kindred, inasmuch as it was wicked. And yet for all this, he bindeth them not all in one bundle, as they say, but he speaketh unto the multitude.

And those are said to resist the Spirit who reject[1] him when he speaketh in the prophets. Neither doth he speak in this place of secret revelations, wherewith God inspireth every one, but of the external ministry; which we must note diligently. He purposeth to take from the Jews all colour of excuse; and, therefore, he upbraideth unto them, that they had purposely, and not of ignorance, resisted God. Whereby it appeareth what great account the Lord maketh of his word, and how reverently he will have us to receive the same. Therefore, lest, like giants, we make war against God, let us learn to hearken to the ministers by whose mouth he teacheth us.

52. *Which of the prophets?* Forasmuch as they ought not to bear their fathers' fault, Stephen seemeth to deal unjustly, in that he reckoneth this amongst their faults unto whom he speaketh; but he had just causes so to do. First, because they did vaunt that they were Abraham's holy progeny, it was worth the labour to show unto them how great vanity that was, as if Stephen should say, that there is no cause why they should vaunt of their stock, forasmuch as they come of those who were wicked murderers of the prophets. So that he toucheth that glancingly which is more plainly set down by the prophets, that they are not the children of prophets, but a degenerate and bastardly issue, the seed of Canaan, &c. Which thing we may at this day

[1] "Contumaciter rejiciunt," contumaciously reject.

object to the Papists, when as they so highly extol their fathers. Furthermore, this serveth to amplify withal, whereas he saith that it is no new thing for them to resist the truth, but that they have this wickedness, as it were, by inheritance from their fathers. Furthermore, it was requisite for Stephen by this means to pluck from their faces the visor of the Church, wherewith they burdened him.[1] This was an unmeet prejudice against the doctrine of the gospel, in that they boasted that they are the Church of God, and did challenge this title[2] by long succession. Therefore, Stephen preventeth them on the contrary, and proveth that their fathers did, no less than they, rage against the prophets, through wicked contempt and hatred of sound doctrine. Lastly, this is the continual custom of the Scripture to gather the fathers and children together[3] under the same guiltiness, seeing they pollute themselves with the same offences, and that famous sentence of Christ answereth thereto, "Fulfil the measure of your fathers, until the just blood come upon you, from Abel unto Zacharias."

Who have foretold. Hereby we gather that this was the drift of all the prophets, to direct their nation unto Christ, as he is the end of the law, (Rom. x. 4.) It were too long to gather all the prophecies wherein the coming of Christ was foretold. Let it suffice to know this generally, that it was the common office of all the prophets to promise salvation by the grace of Christ. Christ is called in this place the *Just*, not only to note his innocency, but of the effect, because it is proper to him to appoint justice in the world. And even in this place doth Stephen prove that the Jews were altogether unworthy of the benefit of redemption, because the fathers did not only refuse that in times past which was witnessed unto them by the prophets, but they did also cruelly murder the messengers of grace, and their children endeavoured to extinguish the author of righteousness and salvation which was offered unto them. By which

[1] "Gravabant," burdened. brought a charge against him, or threw obloquy on him. [2] "Hunc qui titulum sibi . . . . arrogabant," and arrogated this title to themselves. [3] "Aggregare," to sum up, include.

comparison Christ teacheth that the wicked conspiracy of his enemies was an heap of all iniquities.

53. *Who have received the law.* They called that fury wherewith they raged against Stephen zeal of the law, as if he had been a forsaker of the law, and a revolt,[1] and had enforced others to fall away in like sort. Although he was determined to clear himself of this false accusation, yet he did not go through with his answer. For he could not be heard, and it was to no end to speak to deaf men. Therefore, he is content, at a word, to take from them their false colour and pretence. It is evident, saith he, that you lie, when you pretend the zeal of the law, which you transgress and break without ceasing; and as he objected unto them in the words next going before, the treacherous murder of the Just, so now he upbraideth unto them their revolting from the law. Some man will say that Stephen's cause is no whit bettered hereby, because the Jews break the law. But as we have already said, Stephen doth not so chide them, as if his defence did principally consist in this issue, but that they may not flatter themselves in their false boasting. For hypocrites must be handled thus, who will, notwithstanding, seem to be most earnest defenders of God's glory, though indeed they condemn him carelessly. And here is also a fit antistrophe, because they made semblance that they received the law which was committed to them, which was, notwithstanding, reproachfully despised by them.

In the dispositions of angels. It is word for word, *into the dispositions*, but it is all one. Furthermore, we need not seek any other interpreter of this saying than Paul, who saith that the law was disposed or ordained by angels, (Gal. iii. 16;) for he useth the participle there whereof this noun is derived. And his meaning is, that the angels were the messengers of God, and his witnesses in publishing the law, that the authority thereof might be firm and stable.

[1] "Apostata," an apostate.

Therefore, forasmuch as God did call the angels to be, as it were, solemn witnesses when he gave the Jews his law, the same angels shall be witnesses of their unfaithfulness.[1] And to this end doth Stephen make mention of the angels, that he may accuse the Jews in presence of them, and prove them guilty, because they have transgressed the law. Hereby we may gather what shall become of the despisers of the gospel, which doth so far excel the law, that it doth, after a sort, darken the glory thereof, as Paul teacheth, (2 Cor. iii.)

54. *Furthermore, when they heard these things, they were cut asunder in their hearts, and they gnashed upon him with their teeth.*

55. *But forasmuch as he was full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;*

56. *And he said, Behold, I see the heavens open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. And they cried with a loud voice, and stopped their ears;*

57. *And with one accord they ran upon him:*

58. *And having cast him out of the city, they stoned him.*

54. *When they heard.* The beginning of the action had in it some colour of judgment; but at length the judges cannot bridle their fury. First, they interrupt him with murmuring and noise, now they break out into envious and deadly cryings,[2] lest they should hear any one word. Afterward they hale the holy man (out of the city,) that they may put him to death. And Luke expresseth properly what force Satan hath to drive forward the adversaries of the word. When he saith that *they burst asunder inwardly*, he noteth that they were not only angry, but they were also stricken with madness. Which fury breaketh out into the gnashing of the teeth, as a violent fire into flame. The reprobate, who are at Satan's commandment, must needs be thus moved with the hearing of the word of God; and this

[1] "Perfidiæ," perfidy,

[2] "Infestis clamoribus," hostile clamour.

is the state of the gospel, it driveth hypocrites into madness who might seem before to be modest, as if a drunken man who is desirous of sleep be suddenly awakened. Therefore, Simeon assigneth this to Christ, as proper to him, to disclose the thoughts of many hearts, (Luke ii. 35.) Yet, notwithstanding, this ought not to be ascribed to the doctrine of salvation, whose end is rather this, to frame men's minds to obey God after that it hath subdued them. But so soon as Satan hath possessed their minds, if they be urged, their ungodliness will break out. Therefore, this is an accidentary [accidental] evil; yet we are taught by these examples, that we must not look that the word of God should draw all men unto a sound mind.

Which doctrine is very requisite for us unto constancy. Those which are teachers cannot do their duty as they ought, but they must set themselves against the contemners of God. And forasmuch as there are always some wicked men, which set light by the majesty of God, they must ever now and then have recourse unto this vehemency of Stephen. For they may not wink when God's honour is taken from him. And what shall be the end thereof? Their ungodliness shall be the more incensed, so that we shall seem to pour oil into the fire, (as they say.) But whatsoever come of it, yet must we not spare the wicked, but we must keep them down mightily, although they could pour out all the furies of hell. And it is certain that those which will flatter the wicked do not respect the fruit,[1] but are faint-hearted through fear of danger. But as for us, howsoever we have no such success as we could wish, let us know that courage in defending the doctrine of godliness is a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.

55. *Forasmuch as he was full.* We cannot almost express into what straits the servant of Christ was brought, when

[1] "Qui impiorum aures deliciis mulceri volunt, non tam respicere profectum," who would pour soothing words into the ears of the wicked, look not so much to their profit.

he saw himself beset round with raging enemies; the goodness of his cause was oppressed, partly with false accusations and malice, partly with violence and outrageous outcries; he was environed with stern countenances on every side; he himself was haled unto a cruel and horrible kind of death; he could espy succour and ease no where. Therefore, being thus destitute of man's help, he turneth himself toward God. We must first note this, that Stephen did look unto God, who is the judge of life and death, (turning his eyes from beholding the world,) when he was brought into extreme despair of all things, whilst that there is nothing but death before his eyes. This done, we must also add this, that his expectation was not in vain, because Christ appeared to him by and by. Although Luke doth signify, that he was now armed with such power of the Spirit as could not be overcome, so that nothing could hinder him from beholding the heavens; therefore Stephen looketh up toward heaven, that he may gather courage by beholding Christ; that dying he may triumph gloriously, having overcome death. But as for us, it is no marvel if Christ do not show himself to us, because we are so set and tied upon the earth. Hereby it cometh to pass, that our hearts fail us at every light rumour of danger, and even at the falling of a leaf. And that for good causes; for where is our strength but in Christ? But we pass over the heavens, as if we had no help any where else, save only in the world. Furthermore, this vice can be redressed by no other means than if God lift us up by his Spirit, being naturally set upon the earth. Therefore, Luke assigneth this cause, why Stephen looked up stedfastly toward heaven, because he was full of the Spirit. We must also ascend into heaven, having this Spirit to be our director and guide, so often as we are oppressed with troubles. And, surely, until such time as he illuminate us, our eyes are not so quick of sight, that they can come unto heaven. Yea, the eyes of the flesh are so dull, that they cannot ascend into heaven.

He saw the glory of God. Luke signifieth, as I have said, that Christ appeared forthwith to Stephen so soon as he

lifted up his eyes towards heaven. But he telleth us before, that he had other eyes given him than the fleshly eyes, seeing that with the same[1] he flieth up unto the glory of God. Whence we must gather a general comfort, that God will be no less present with us, if, forsaking the world, all our senses strive to come to him; not that he appeareth unto us by any external vision, as he did to Stephen, but he will so reveal himself unto us within, that we may indeed feel his presence. And this manner of seeing ought to be sufficient for us, when God doth not only, by his power and grace, declare that he is nigh at hand, but doth also prove that he dwelleth in us.

56. *Behold, I see the heavens.* God meant not only privately to provide for his servant, but also to wring and torment his enemies; as Stephen doth courageously triumph over them, when he affirmeth plainly that he saw a miracle. And here may a question be moved, how the heavens were opened? For mine own part, I think that there was nothing changed in the nature of the heavens; but that Stephen had new quickness of sight granted him, which pierced through all lets, even unto the invisible glory of the kingdom of heaven. For admit we grant that there was some division or parting[2] made in heaven, yet man's eye could never reach so far. Again, Stephen alone did see the glory of God. For that spectacle was not only hid from the wicked, who stood in the same place, but they were also so blinded within themselves, that they did not see the manifest truth.[3] Therefore, he saith that the heavens are opened to him in this respect, because nothing keepeth him from beholding the glory of God. Whereupon it followeth that the miracle was not wrought in heaven, but in his eyes. Wherefore, there is no cause why we should dispute long about any natural vision; because it is certain that Christ appeared unto him not after some natural manner, but after a new and singular sort. And I pray you of what colour

[1] "Quorum perspicacia," by their perspicacity. [2] "Scissuram," rent or opening. [3] "Apertam veritatis lucem," the open light of truth.

was the glory of God, that it could be seen naturally with the eyes of the flesh? Therefore, we must imagine nothing in this vision but that which is divine. Moreover, this is worth the noting, that the glory of God appeared not unto Stephen wholly as it was, but according to man's capacity. For that infiniteness cannot be comprehended with the measure of any creature.

The Son of man standing. He seeth Christ reigning in that flesh wherein he was abased; so that in very deed the victory did consist in this one thing. Therefore, it is not superfluous in that Christ appeareth unto him, and for this cause doth he also call him the Son of man, as if he should say, I see that man whom ye thought ye had quite extinguished by death enjoying the government of heaven; therefore, gnash with your teeth as much as you list: there is no cause why I should fear to fight for him even unto blood, who shall not only defend his own cause, but my salvation also. Notwithstanding, here may a question be moved, why he saw him standing, who is said elsewhere to sit? Augustine, as he is sometimes more subtle than needs, saith, "that he sitteth as a judge, that he stood then as an advocate." For mine own part, I think that though these speeches be diverse, yet they signify both one thing. For neither sitting, nor yet standing, noteth out how the body of Christ was framed; but this is referred unto his power and kingdom. For where shall we erect him a throne, that he may sit at the right hand of God the Father, seeing God doth fill all things in such sort, that we ought to imagine no place for his right hand?

Therefore, the whole text is a metaphor, when Christ is said to sit or stand at the right hand of God the Father, and the plain meaning is this, that Christ hath all power given him, that he may reign in his Father's stead in that flesh wherein he was humbled, and that he may be next him. And although this power be spread abroad through heaven and earth, yet some men imagine amiss that Christ is every where in his human nature. For, though he be contained in a certain place, yet that hindereth no whit but

that he may and doth show forth his power throughout all the world. Therefore, if we be desirous to feel him present by the working of his grace, we must seek him in heaven; as he revealed himself unto Stephen there. Also, some men do affirm ridiculously out of this place, that he drew near unto Stephen that he might see him.[1] For we have already said, that Stephen's eyes were so lifted up by the power of the Spirit,[2] that no distance of place could hinder the same. I confess, indeed, that speaking properly, that is, philosophically, there is no place above the heavens. But this is sufficient for me, that it is perverse doting to place Christ any where else save only in heaven, and above the elements of the world,

57. *Crying with a loud voice.* This was either a vain show of zeal, as hypocrites are almost always pricked forward with ambition to break out into immoderate heat; as Caiaphas when he heard Christ say thus, After this ye shall see the Son of man, &c., did rent his clothes in token of indignation, as if it were intolerable blasphemy; or else certainly the preaching of the glory of Christ was unto them such a torment, that they must needs burst through madness. And I am rather of this mind; for Luke saith afterward, that they were carried violently, as those men which have no hold of themselves use to leap out immoderately.[3]

58. *They stoned.* God had appointed this kind of punishment in the law for false prophets, as it is written in the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy; but God doth also define there who ought to be reckoned in that number; to wit, he which doth attempt to bring the people unto strange gods; therefore the stoning of Stephen was both unjust and also wicked, because he was unjustly condemned; so that the martyrs of Christ must suffer like punishment with the wicked. It is the cause alone which maketh the difference;

[1] "Ut videri posset ab eo," that he might be seen by him. [2] "Per fidem," through faith, omitted. [3] "Subito et intemperanter prosilire," break out suddenly and intemperately.

but this difference is so highly esteemed before God and his angels, that the rebukes of the martyrs[1] do far excel all glory of the world. Yet here may a question be moved, How it was lawful for the Jews to stone Stephen, who had not the government in their hands? For in Christ's cause they answer, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death. I answer, that they did this violently and in an uproar. And whereas the president did not punish this wickedness, it may be that he winked at many things,[2] lest they should bring that hatred upon his own head which they bare against the name of Christ. We see that the Roman presidents did chiefly wink at the civil discords of that nation, even of set purpose; that when one of them had murdered another,[3] they might the sooner be overcome afterward.

And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, named Saul.

59. *And they stoned Stephen, calling on, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

60. *And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said thus, he fell on sleep.*

61. *And Saul consented* [*was consenting*] *to his death.*

And the witnesses. Luke signifieth, that even in that tumult they observed some show of judgment. This was not commanded in vain that the witnesses should throw the first stone; because, seeing they must commit the murder with their own hands, many are holden with a certain dread, who otherwise are less afraid to cut the throats of the innocent with perjury of the tongue. But in the mean season, we gather how blind and mad the ungodliness of these witnesses was, who are not afraid to imbrue their bloody hands with the blood of an innocent, who had already committed murder with their tongues. Whereas he saith, that their

[1] "Martyrum probra," the ignominy. [2] "In populo turbulento et prope indomito," in a turbulent and almost untameable people, omitted.

[3] "Ut mutuo confecti," that having mutually destroyed each other.

clothes were laid down at the feet of Saul, he showeth that there was no let in him, but that being cast into a reprobate sense he might have perished with the rest.[1] For who would not think that he was a desperate, [desperado,] who had infected his youth with such cruelty?[2] Neither is his age expressed to lessen his fault, as some unskilful men go about to prove; for he was of those years, that want of knowledge could no whit excuse him. And Luke will shortly after declare, that he was sent by the high priest to persecute the faithful. Therefore he was no child, he might well be counted a man. Why, then, is his youth mentioned? That every man may consider with himself what great hurt he might have done in God's Church, unless Christ had bridled him betimes. And therein appeareth a most notable token both of God's power and also of his grace, in that he tamed a fierce and wild beast in his chief fury, even in a moment, and in that he extolled a miserable murderer so highly who through his wickedness was drowned almost in the deep pit of hell.

59. *Calling on.* Because he had uttered words enough before men, though in vain, he turneth himself now unto God for good causes, and armeth himself with prayer to suffer all things. For although we have need to run unto God's help every minute of an hour during our whole warfare, yet we have greatest need to call upon God in the last conflict, which is the hardest.

And Luke expresseth again how furious mad they were, because their cruelty was not assuaged even when they saw the servant of Christ praying humbly. Furthermore, here is set down a prayer of Stephen having two members. In the former member, where he commendeth his spirit to Christ, he showeth the constancy of his faith. In the other, where he prayeth for his enemies, he testifieth his love towards men. Forasmuch as the whole perfection of godliness

[1] "Per eum non stetisse quominus in sensum reprobum conjectus, cum aliis periret," that it was not owing to himself that he did not fall into a reprobate mind, and perish with the rest (of the Jews.) [2] "Tirocenio," training.

consisteth upon [of] these two parts, we have in the death of Stephen a rare example of a godly and holy death. It is to be thought that he used many more words, but the sum tendeth to this end.

Lord Jesus. I have already said, that this prayer was a witness of confidence; and surely the courageousness and violentness[1] of Stephen was great, that when as he saw the stones fly about his ears, wherewith he should be stoned by and by; when as he heareth cruel curses and reproaches against his head; he yet stayeth himself meekly[2] upon the grace of Christ. In like sort, the Lord will have his servants to be brought to nought as it were sometimes, to the end their salvation may be the more wonderful. And let us define this salvation not by the understanding of our flesh,[3] but by faith. We see how Stephen leaneth not unto the judgment of the flesh, but rather assuring himself, even in very destruction, that he shall be saved, he suffereth death with a quiet mind. For undoubtedly he was assured of this, that our life is hid with Christ in God, (Col. iii. 3.)

Therefore, casting off all care of the body, he is content to commit his soul into the hands of Christ. For he could not pray thus from his heart, unless, having forgotten this life, he had cast off all care of the same.

It behoveth us with David (Psalm xxxi. 6) to commit our souls into the hands of God daily so long as we are in the world, because we are environed with a thousand deaths, that God may deliver our life from all dangers; but when we must die indeed, and we are called thereunto, we must fly unto this prayer, that Christ will receive our spirit. For he commended his own spirit into the hands of his Father, to this end, that he may keep ours for ever. This is an inestimable comfort, in that we know our souls do not wander up and down[4] when they flit out of our bodies, but that Christ receiveth them, that he may keep them faithfully, if we commend them into his hands. This hope ought to en-

[1] "Animi magnitudo," magnanimity. [2] "Secure," securely.
[3] "Non carnis nostræ sensu," not by our carnal sense. [4] "Fortuito," fortuitously.

courage us to suffer death patiently. Yea, whosoever commendeth his soul to Christ with an earnest affection of faith, he must needs resign himself wholly to his pleasure and will. And this place doth plainly testify that the soul of man is no vain blast which vanisheth away, as some frantic fellows imagine dotingly,[1] but that it is an essential spirit which liveth after this life. Furthermore, we are taught hereby that we call upon Christ rightly and lawfully, because all power is given him of the Father, for this cause, that all men may commit themselves to his tuition.[2]

60. *Kneeling down, he cried.* This is the other part of his prayer, wherein he joineth the love of men with faith in Christ; and surely if we desire to be gathered to Christ for our salvation, we must put on this affection. Whereas Stephen prayeth for his enemies, and those most deadly, and even in the very instant when their cruelty might provoke him unto desire of revenge, he declareth sufficiently what affection he beareth toward all other men.

And we know that we are all commanded[3] to do the same which Stephen did;[4] but because there is nothing more hard than so to forgive injuries, that we will wish well to those who would have us undone, (Matth. v. 43, 44;) therefore we must always set Stephen before our eyes for an example. He crieth indeed with a loud voice, but he maketh show of nothing before men which was not spoken sincerely and from the heart, as God himself doth witness. Yet he crieth aloud, that he may omit nothing which might serve to assuage the cruelty of the enemies. The fruit appeared not forthwith, yet undoubtedly he prayed not in vain; and Paul is unto us a sufficient testimony[5] that this sin was not laid to all their charges. I will not say as Augustine, that unless Stephen had prayed the Church should not have had Paul; for this is somewhat hard; only I say this, that whereas

[1] "Ut quidam phrenetici delirant," as some phrenzied persons rave.
[2] "In ejus fidem," to his faith. [3] "A Christo," by Christ, omitted.
[4] "Quod autem Stephanum fecisse narrat Lucas," which Luke relates that Stephen did. [5] "Illustre documentum," an illustrious proof.

God pardoned Paul, it appeareth thereby that Stephen's prayer was not in vain. Here ariseth a question, how Stephen prayeth for those which he said of late did resist the Holy Ghost; but this seemeth to be the sin against the Spirit which shall never be forgiven? We may easily answer, that that is pronounced generally of all which belongeth to many everywhere; therefore, he called not the body of the people rebellious in such sort that he exempted none. Again, I have declared before what manner of resisting he condemned in that place; for it followeth not by and by, that they sin against the Holy Ghost who resist him for a time. When he prayeth that God will not lay the sin to their charge, his meaning is, that the guiltiness may not remain in them.

And when he had said thus, he fell on sleep. This was added, that we may know that these words were uttered even when he was ready to yield up the ghost, which is a token of wonderful constancy; also this word *sleep* noteth a meek kind of death. Now, because he made this prayer when he was at the point of death, he was not moved with any hope of obtaining pardon, to be so careful to appease his enemies, but only that they might repent. When this word *sleep* is taken in the Scripture for to die, it must be referred unto the body, lest any man imagine foolishly, with unlearned men, that the souls do also sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

1. *And at that day there was great persecution raised against the church which was at Jerusalem. Therefore they were all scattered abroad throughout all regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*
2. *And religious men dressed Stephen together, and they mourned sore for him.*

3. *But Saul made havock of the church, and, entering into houses, and drawing thence men and women, he cast them into prison.*
4. *And they being dispersed, did go about preaching the word of God.*

In this history we may first see the state of the godly in this world, to wit, that they are like sheep appointed to be slain, as it is in the Psalm, (Psalm xliv. 22;) and especially when the Lord letteth loose the bridle to his enemies, that they may put that cruelty in execution which they have in mind conceived. Secondly, here is set down the end of persecutions, to wit, that they are so far from breaking off the course of the gospel, that they are rather made helps to further the same through the wonderful counsel of God. Like as it was a manifest miracle, that the scattering abroad, mentioned by Luke, gathered many unto the unity of faith who were estranged from God before. Now, let us consider every thing in order.

1. *At that day.* The persecution began at Stephen, after that, when their madness was thereby set on fire, it waxed hot against all, both one and other. For the wicked are like brute beasts, for when they have once tasted blood they are more desirous thereof, and become more cruel through committing murder. For Satan, who is the father of all cruelty, doth first take from them all feeling of humanity when they are once imbrued with innocent blood; that done, he stirreth up in them an unquenchable thirsting after blood, whence those violent assaults to commit murder come; so that when they have once begun, they will never make an end with their will. Moreover, when they have power once granted them to do hurt, their boldness increaseth in tract of time, so that they are carried headlong more immoderately, which thing Luke also noteth when he saith, The persecution was great. Undoubtedly the Church had but small rest before, neither was it free from the vexation of the

wicked; but the Lord spared his for a time, that they might have some liberty, and now they began to be sorer set on.

These things must be applied unto our time also. If the furiousness of our enemies seem at any time to be as it were fallen on sleep, so that it casteth not out flames far, let us know that the Lord provideth for our weakness; yet, let us not in the mean season imagine that we shall have continual truce, but let us be in readiness to suffer sorer brunts, as often as they shall break out suddenly. Let us also remember, that if at any time the constancy of one man have whetted the cruelty of our enemies, the blame of the evil is unjustly ascribed to him. For Luke doth not defame Stephen,[1] when as he saith, that by means of him the Church was sorer vexed than before; but he rather turneth this to his praise, because he did valiantly, as the standard-bearer, encourage others with his example to fight courageously. When he calleth it the Church which was at Jerusalem, his meaning is not that there were Churches elsewhere, but he passeth over unto these things which ensued thereupon. For whereas there was but this one only body of the godly in all the world, it was rent in pieces through flight; yet there sprung up more Churches by and by of those lame members which were dispersed here and there, and so the body of Christ was spread abroad far and wide, whereas it was before shut up within the walls of Jerusalem.

They were all scattered abroad. It is certain that they were not all scattered abroad, but the Scripture useth an universal note, for that which we say, Every where or abroad.[2] The sum is this, that not only a few were in danger; because the cruelty of the enemies raged throughout the whole Church. Many do oftentimes take themselves to their feet, through faintness of heart, even when they hear any light rumour, but these are in another case. For they fled not unadvisedly, being discouraged,[3] but because they saw no other means to pacify the fury of the

[1] "Neque enim Stephanum ignominia notat Lucas," for Luke does not fix a stigma on Stephen. [2] "Vulgo," commonly. [3] "Consternati," in consternation.

adversaries. And he saith, that they were scattered not only through divers places of Judea, but that they came even unto Samaria; so that the middle wall began to be pulled down, which made division between the Jews and the Gentiles, (Ephes. ii. 14.) For the conversion of Samaria was, as it were, the first fruits of the calling of the Gentiles. For although they had circumcision, as had the people of God, yet we know that there was great dissension, and that not without great cause, forasmuch as they had in Samaria only a forged worship of God, as Christ affirmeth, because it was only an unsavoury emulation.[1] Therefore God set open the gate for the gospel then, that the sceptre of Christ, sent out of Jerusalem, might come unto the Gentiles. He exempteth the apostles out of this number, not that they were free from the common danger, but because it is the duty of a good pastor to set himself against the invasions of wolves for the safety of his flock.

But here may a question be asked, forasmuch as they were commanded to preach the gospel throughout the whole world, (Mark xvi. 16,) why they stayed at Jerusalem, even when they were expelled thence with force and hand? I answer, that seeing Christ had commanded them to begin at Jerusalem, they employed themselves there until such time as being brought into some other place by his hand, they might know, for a surety, that he was their guide. And we see how fearfully they proceeded to preach the gospel; not that they foreslowed [shunned] that function which was enjoined them, but because they were amazed at a new and unwonted thing. Therefore, seeing they see the gospel so mightily resisted at Jerusalem, they dare go to no other place until such time as they have broken that first huge heap of straits. Assuredly, they provide neither for their ease, nor yet for their own commodities, either for being void of care by staying at Jerusalem; for they have a painful charge, they are continually amidst divers dangers, they encounter with great troubles. Wherefore, undoubt-

[1] "Insipida...æmulatio," an insipid, senseless rivalship.

edly, they are purposed to do their duty; and especially, whereas they stand to it when all the rest fly, that is an evident testimony of valiant constancy. If any man object that they might have divided the provinces amongst them, that they might not all have been occupied in one place, I answer, that Jerusalem alone had business enough for them all.

In sum, Luke reckoneth up this as a thing worthy of praise, that they followed not the rest into voluntary exile to avoid persecution; and yet he doth not reprehend the flight of those men whose state was more free. For the apostles did consider what particular thing their calling had; to wit, that they should keep their standing, seeing the wolves did invade the sheepfold. The rigour of Tertullian, and such like, was too great, who did deny indifferently that it is lawful to fly for fear of persecution. Augustine saith better, who giveth leave to fly in such sort that the churches, being destitute of their pastors, be not betrayed into the hands of the enemies. This is surely the best moderation, which beareth neither too much with the flesh, neither driveth those headlong to death who may lawfully save their lives. Let him that is disposed read the 180th Epistle to Honoratus.

That I may return to the apostles, if they had been scattered here and there with fear of persecution, even at the beginning, all men might have rightly called them hirelings. How hurtful and filthy had the forsaking of the place been at the present time? How greatly would it have discouraged the minds of all men? What great hurt should they have done with their example among the posterity? It shall sometimes so fall out indeed, that the pastor may also fly; that is, if they invade him alone, if the laying waste of the Church be not feared if he be absent.[1] But and if both his flock and he have to encounter with the adversary, he is a treacherous forsaker of his office if he stand not stoutly to it even until the end. Private persons have greater liberty.

[1] "Propter ejus absentiam," on account of his absence.

2. *They dressed Stephen.* Luke showeth, that even in the heat of persecution the godly were not discouraged, but being always zealous, they did those duties which did belong to godliness. Burial seemeth to be a matter of small importance; rather than they will foreslow [neglect] the same, they bring themselves in no small hazard of life. And as the circumstance of time doth declare, that they contemned death valiantly, so again, we gather thereby that they were careful to do this thing not without great and urgent cause. For this served greatly to exercise their faith, that the body of the holy martyr should not be left to the wild beasts, in whom Christ had triumphed nobly according to the glory of his gospel. Neither could they live to Christ, unless they were ready to be gathered unto Stephen into the society of death. Therefore the care they had to bury the martyr was unto them a meditation unto invincible constancy of professing the faith. Therefore they sought not in a superfluous matter, with an unadvised zeal, to provoke their adversaries. Although that general reason, which ought always and every where to be of force amongst the godly, was undoubtedly of great weight with them. For the rite of burying doth appertain unto the hope of the resurrection, as it was ordained by God since the beginning of the world to this end.

Wherefore, this was always counted cruel barbarism to suffer bodies to lie unburied willingly. Profane men did not know why they should account the rite of burial so holy; but we are not ignorant of the end thereof, to wit, that those which remain alive may know that the bodies are committed to the earth as to a prison,[1] until they be raised up thence. Whereby it appeareth that this duty is profitable rather for those which are alive than those which are dead. Although it is also a point of our humanity to give due honour to those bodies to which we know blessed immortality to be promised.

They made great lamentation. Luke doth also commend

[1] "Velut in custodiam," as it were in custody.

their profession of godliness and faith in their lamentation. For a doleful and unprosperous end causeth men, for the most part, to forsake those causes wherein they were delighted before. But, on the other side, these men declare by their mourning, that they are no whit terrified with the death of Stephen from standing stoutly in the approbation of their cause; considering therewithal what great loss God's Church suffered by the death of one man. And we must reject that foolish philosophy which willeth all men to be altogether blockish that they may be wise. It must needs be that the Stoics were void of common sense who would have a man to be without all affection. Certain mad fellows would gladly bring in the same dotings into the Church at this day, and yet, notwithstanding, although they require an heart of iron of other men, there is nothing softer or more effeminate than they. They cannot abide that other men should shed one tear; if anything fall out otherwise than they would wish, they make no end of mourning. God doth thus punish their arrogancy jestingly, (that I may so term it,) seeing that he setteth them to be laughed at even by boys. But let us know that those affections which God hath given to man's nature are, of themselves, no more corrupt than the author himself; but that they are first to be esteemed according to the cause; secondly, if they keep a mean and moderation. Surely that man which denieth that we ought to rejoice over the gifts of God is more like a block than a man; therefore, we may no less lawfully sorrow when they be taken away. And lest I pass the compass of this present place, Paul doth not altogether forbid men mourning, when any of their friends are taken away by death, but he would have a difference between them and the unbelievers; because hope ought to be to them a comfort and a remedy against impatience. For the beginning of death caused us to sorrow for good causes; but because we know that we have life restored to us in Christ, we have that which is sufficient to appease our sorrow. In like sort, when we are sorry that the Church is deprived of rare and excel-

lent men, there is good cause of sorrow; only we must seek such comfort as may correct excess.

3. *But Saul.* We must note two things in this place, how great the cruelty of the adversaries was, and how wonderful the goodness of God was, who vouchsafed to make Paul a pastor of so cruel a wolf. For that desire to lay waste the Church wherewith he was incensed did seem to cut away all hope. Therefore his conversion was so much the more excellent afterward. And it is not to be doubted but that this punishment was laid upon him by God, after that he had conspired to put Stephen to death, together with the other wicked men, that he should be the ringleader of cruelty. For God doth oftentimes punish sins more sharply in the elect than in the reprobate.

4. *And they were scattered abroad.* Luke declareth in this place also, that it came to pass by the wonderful providence of God, that the scattering abroad of the faithful should bring many unto the unity of faith; thus doth the Lord use to bring light out of darkness, and life out of death. For the voice of the gospel, which was heard heretofore in one place only, doth now sound everywhere; in the mean season, we are taught by this example that we must not yield unto persecutions, but rather be encouraged unto valiantness; for, when the faithful flee from Jerusalem, they are not afterward discouraged either with exile or with their present miseries, or with any fear, that they degenerate into slothfulness;[1] but they are as ready to preach Christ even in the midst of their calamity as if they had never suffered any trouble. Moreover, Luke seemeth to note that they led a wandering life, in that they changed their lodgings often. Therefore, if we desire to be counted their brethren, let us prick forward ourselves so diligently, that no fear or bitterness of cross discourage us, but that we go forward in showing forth the profession

[1] "Ad ignaviam vel tarditatem," unto sloth or cowardice.

of faith; and that we never be weary of furthering the doctrine of Christ; for it is an absurd thing that exile and flight, which are the first exercises of martyrdom, should make us dumb and faint-hearted.

5. *And when Philip came into the city of Samaria, he preached Christ to them.*
6. *And the multitude gave ear to those things which Philip spake, hearing with one consent, and seeing the signs which he showed.*
7. *For whereas many were possessed with unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice; and many that had the palsy, and which were lame, were healed;*
8. *So that there was great joy in that city.*
9. *And a man, named Simon, had been before in the city, exercising the art magic, and bewitching the people of Samaria, saying that he was some great man;*
10. *To whom they all gave heed, both small and great, saying, This man is the great power of God.*
11. *And they had given heed unto him, because they had been bewitched long time with his witchcraft.*
12. *But as soon as they believed Philip preaching concerning the kingdom of God, and in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*
13. *And Simon himself believed, and being baptized, did cleave to Philip; and when he saw the signs and great powers which were done, he wondered.*

5. Luke said that they all preached the Word of God, now he maketh mention of Philip alone, both because his preaching was more fruitful and effectual than the preaching of the rest, and also because there followed notable histories, which he will add afterward. He put the *city of Samaria* for the *city Samaria* which was laid waste by Hyrcanus, and built again by Herod, and called Sebaste. Read Josephus, in his Thirteenth and Fifteenth Books of Antiquities. When he saith that Philip *preached Christ*, he signifieth that the whole sum of the gospel is contained in Christ. The other speech which he useth shortly after is more perfect; yet it

is all one in effect. He joineth the kingdom of God and the name of Christ together; but because we obtain this goodness through Christ, to have God to reign in us, and to lead an heavenly life, being renewed into spiritual righteousness, and dead to the world, therefore the preaching of Christ containeth this point also under it. But the sum is this, that Christ doth repair with his grace the world, being destroyed; which cometh to pass when he reconcileth us to the Father. Secondly, when he regenerateth us by his Spirit, that the kingdom of God may be erected in us when Satan is put to flight. Moreover, whereas he declared before, that the apostles did not stir one foot from Jerusalem, it is to be thought that he speaketh of one of the seven deacons in this place, whose daughters did also prophesy.

6. *And the multitude gave ear.* Luke declareth how the Samaritans did embrace Philip's doctrine. For he saith that they heard, whereby they took some taste; there was also another prick whereby they were pricked forward, and that was miracles; at length there followed attentiveness. This is the right going forward unto faith; for those which refuse that doctrine which they have not heard, how is it possible that they should ever come unto faith, which cometh by hearing? (Rom. x. 14.) Therefore, whereas they were ready to hear, that was the first step unto reverence and attentiveness. And therefore it is no marvel if faith be so rare, and almost none in the world; for how many be there which vouchsafe to hearken when God speaketh? whereby it cometh to pass that the more part rejecteth the truth before they know the same, and have not so much as lightly tasted it. And as hearing is the beginning of faith, so it should not be sufficient of itself, unless the majesty of doctrine should also move the hearts. And surely, whosoever considereth that he hath to do with God, cannot hear him contemptuously when he speaketh; and the very doctrine which is contained in his word shall purchase authority for itself, so that attentiveness shall flow of itself from

hearing. As touching miracles, we know that there is a double use thereof; they serve to prepare us to hear the gospel, and to confirm us in the faith thereof. The adverb, *with one accord*, may be joined as well with hearing as with attentiveness. This latter doth like me better, that they were attentive with one accord; and therein doth Luke commend the force and efficacy of Philip's preaching, because a great number of men was suddenly won to hear attentively with one consent.

7. *Unclean spirits.* He toucheth certain kinds briefly, that we may know with what miracles they[1] were brought to attribute any authority to Philip. That crying wherewith the unclean spirits cried was a token of resistance. Wherefore, this served not a little to set forth the power of Christ, that he did bind the devils with his commandment, though they resisted stubbornly.

8. *The joy* whereof he speaketh is a fruit of faith. For it cannot be but that so soon as we know that God will be favourable and merciful, our minds shall be wrapt with incomparable joy, and such as doth far pass all understanding, (Philip. iv. 7.)

9. *A certain man, named Simon.* This was such a let that it might seem that the gospel could have no passage to come unto the Samaritans; for the minds of them all were bewitched with Simon's jugglings. And this amazedness was grown to some strength by reason of long space of time. Furthermore, experience teacheth what a hard matter it is to pluck that error out of the minds of men which hath taken root through long continuance, and to call them back unto a sound and right mind who are already hardened. Superstition made them more obstinate in their error, because they counted Simon not only as a prophet of God, but even as the Spirit of God.

[1] "Samaritæ," the Samaritans.

10. For the surname, *great power*, tendeth to this end, that whatsoever should otherwise be divine might wax vile through this greatness. Therefore the power of Christ appeareth hereby more plainly, in that Philip brake through these lets; which thing Luke amplifieth,

11. When he saith that *they were astonied*, from the least to the greatest. For seeing all men, of what estate soever they were, were deluded, what entrance could the gospel have, especially since it was no mean seducing? for all their senses were besotted. And besides that we see thereby how mighty the truth is, there is also set before us an example of constancy in Philip, who, though he saw no way, yet doth he set hand to the Lord's work with a valiant courage, waiting for the success which God should give. And thus must we do, we must valiantly attempt whatsoever the Lord commandeth, even when our endeavours seem to be vain. Furthermore, whereas Satan did bewitch the Samaritans, let us know that it is the common punishment of infidelity. All men are not bewitched, indeed, with the jugglings of enchanters, neither are there Simons everywhere, which can so seduce and deceive; but my meaning is, that it is no wonder[1] if Satan do mock men diversely in the dark; for they are subject to all errors whosoever are not governed by the Spirit of God. Furthermore, when Luke saith that they were all seduced one with another, we are taught that neither wit, neither all that reason and wisdom which we have, are sufficient to avoid the craftiness of Satan withal. And surely we see in what foolish and doting errors they were entangled, who were counted in the world wiser than others.

The great power of God. Therefore Satan abused the name of God to deceive, which is the most pestilent kind of deceiving, so far is it from being any excuse. It hath been said before, that Simon did take to himself the name of the principal power of God, that he might suppress and surpass

[1] "Non esse mirum aut insolens," that it is not strange or unusual.

whatsoever was elsewhere divine, as the sun darkeneth all the stars with his light. This was wicked and ungodly profaning of the name of God. But we read of nothing which was done here, which is not done as yet daily; for men are bent to nothing more than to translate that to Satan which is proper to God. They pretend religion; but what did this pretence help the Samaritans? Therefore it goeth well with us when God setteth forth to us his power in Christ, and declareth therewith that we must not seek the same anywhere else, and doth discover the sleights and juggling casts of Satan, which we must avoid, to the end he may keep us still in himself.

12. *When they had believed.* That is the miracle whereof I spake, because they heard Philip, who were altogether made astonied with the illusions of Simon; in that they were made partakers of the heavenly wisdom who were blockish and dull. So that they were, after a sort, brought from hell to heaven. Whereas baptism followed faith, it agreeth with Christ's institution, as concerning strangers, (Mark xvi. 47,) and those which were without. For it was meet that they should be ingrafted into the body of the Church before they should receive the sign; but the Anabaptists are too foolish, whilst they endeavour to prove by these places that infants are not to be baptized. Men and women could not be baptized without making confession of their faith; but they were admitted unto baptism upon this condition, that their families might[1] be consecrated to God; for the covenant goeth thus: "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed," (Gen. xvii. 7.)

13. *Simon also himself.* He which had besotted the whole city with his witchery receiveth the truth together with others. He which had boasted himself to be the principal power of God submitteth himself to God, [Christ;] though he were brought to the knowledge of the gospel, not

[1] "Simul," at the same time.

so much for his own sake alone, as for the whole country's sake, that that offence might be taken out of the way which might have hindered the unskilful. And to this end tendeth that which Luke setteth down afterward, that he wondered at the signs. For God meant to triumph over this man, whom the Samaritans counted a petit God;[1] which cometh to pass whilst he is enforced to give glory to the true miracles, after that his vain boasting is taken away. And yet he giveth not himself over sincerely to Christ; for then his ambition, and that wicked and profane account which he made of the gifts of God, should not break out. And yet I am not of their mind who think that he made only a semblance of faith, seeing he did not believe. Luke saith plainly that he believed, and the reason is added, Because he was touched with wondering. How, then, doth he shortly after betray himself to be but a hypocrite? I answer, That there is some mean between faith and mere dissimulation. The Epicures [Epicureans] and Lucianists do profess that they believe, whereas notwithstanding they laugh inwardly, whereas the hope of eternal life is unto them a vain thing; finally, whereas they have no more godliness than dogs or swine.

But there be many who, howsoever they be not regenerate with the Spirit of adoption, and do not addict themselves unto God with the true affection of the heart, being overcome with the power of the Word, do not only confess that that is true which is taught, but are also touched with some fear of God, so that they receive doctrine; for they conceive that God must be heard; that he is both the author and also the judge of the world. Therefore, they make no semblance of faith before men, which is none, but they think that they believe. And this faith continueth only for a time, whereof Christ speaketh in Mark, (Mark iv.; Luke viii. 13;) to wit, when the seed of the Word conceived in the mind is, notwithstanding, choked forthwith with divers cares of the world, or with wicked affections, so that

[1] "Semideo," a demigod.

it never cometh to any ripeness; yea, rather, it groweth out of kind unto unprofitable corn nothing worth. Such, therefore, was Simon's faith; he perceiveth that the doctrine of the gospel is true, and he is enforced to receive the same with the feeling of his conscience; but the groundwork is wanting; that is, the denial of himself. Whereupon it followed that his mind was enwrapped in dissimulation, which he uttereth forthwith. But let us know that his hypocrisy was such as he deceived himself in; and not that gross hypocrisy whereof Epicures and such like make boast;[1] because they dare not confess the contempt of God.

He was baptized. It appeareth plainly, by this example of Simon, that all men have not that grace given them in baptism, which grace is there figured. The opinion of the Papists is this, That unless mortal sin be the cause of let,[2] all men receive the truth and effect with the signs. So that they attribute unto the sacraments magical force, as if they did profit without faith. But let us know that the Lord offereth to us by the sacraments, whatsoever the annexed promises do sound;[3] and that they are not offered in vain, so that[4] being directed unto Christ by faith, we set [seek] from him whatsoever the sacraments do promise. And although the receiving of baptism did profit him nothing then, yet if conversion followed afterward, as some men suppose, the profit was not extinguished nor abolished. For it cometh to pass oftentimes that the Spirit of God worketh afterward after a long time, that the sacraments may begin to show forth their force.[5]

Did cleave to Philip. Whereas Philip admitted him into his company, it appeareth thereby how hard a matter it is to know hypocrites. And this is a trial of our patience. So Demas was a companion of Paul for a time; afterward he became an unfaithful revolt,[6] (2 Tim. iv. 10.) Finally, we cannot escape this evil, but that wicked men and deceitful will sometimes join themselves unto us; and if at any

[1] "Venditant," make a display of.
[2] "Ponat obicem," interpose an obstacle.
[3] "Sonant," mean.
[4] "Modo," provided that.
[5] "Efficaciam," efficacy.
[6] "Desertor," deserter.

time the wicked creep craftily into our company, proud censors burden us unjustly, as if we were to answer for their misdeeds. Though we must take heed of facility, which causeth the gospel to be slandered oftentimes, and we must be so much the more vigilant, that we admit none without great choice, forasmuch as we hear that great men have been deceived. He saith that he was made astonied with the greatness of the signs; that we may know that that great power, whereof he boasted, was nothing else but juggling and smokes. And Luke speaketh not in this place of any plain wondering, but of a damp or trance, which causeth a man to forget what he doth.[1]

14. *And when the apostles which were at Jerusalem had heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John :*
15. *Who, when they were come down, they prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost :*
16. *For he was not as yet come down upon any of them ; but they were only baptized in the name of Christ Jesus.*
17. *Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

14. Luke describeth, in this place, the proceedings of the grace of God in the Samaritans, as he useth to enrich the faithful continually with greater gifts of his Spirit, for we must not think that the apostles took that counsel whereof Luke speaketh, without the instinct of the same God who had already begun his work in Samaria by the hand of Philip; and he useth his instruments diversely unto divers parts of his work, according to his good pleasure. He used Philip as an instrument to bring them unto the faith; now he ordaineth Peter and John to be ministers to give the Spirit, and thus doth he foster the unity of his Church when one helpeth another, and not only knit man and man together, but whole churches also. He could have finished

[1] "Neque enim simplex admiratio hic notatur, sed ecstasis, quæ hominem extra se rapit," for the thing here denoted is not simple wonder, but ecstacy, by which a man is rapt, (carried out of himself.)

that which he had begun by Philip; but to the end the Samaritans might learn to embrace brotherly fellowship with the first Church, he meant to bind them herewith as with a band; secondly, he meant to grant the apostles (whom he had commanded to preach the gospel throughout the whole world—Mark xvi. 15) this privilege, that they might the better all grow together into one faith of the gospel; and we know that it was otherwise dangerous, lest, seeing the Jews and Samaritans were much unlike in mind and manners, being so divided, they should by this means divide Christ, or at least feign to themselves a new Church.

In the mean season, we see how careful the apostles were to help their brethren; for they stay not until they be requested, but they take this charge upon them of their own accord. The apostles do not this through any distrust, as if they did suspect that Philip did not his duty so uprightly as he ought;[1] but they set to their hand to help him in his work, and Peter and John came not only to help him, and to be partakers of his labours, but also to approve the same. Again, Philip is not grieved because other men finish that building which he had begun, but they one help another full gently and faithfully; and surely it is ambition alone which will not suffer holy fellowship and mutual imparting of duties to enter.[2] Whereas Luke saith that Peter was sent by the rest, we may hereby gather that he was not the chief ruler over his fellows in office;[3] but did so excel amongst them, that yet, notwithstanding, he was subject to, and did obey the body.

Which were at Jerusalem. This may carry a double meaning, either that all the apostles were at Jerusalem then, or that there were certain resident there, when the rest went hither and thither; and I do rather allow this latter, for it is to be thought that they did so divide themselves, that always some of the number might take upon them divers em-

[1] "Minus dextre quam par esset," less dexterously than was meet.

[2] "Quæ sanctæ communicatione januam claudit," which shuts the door against holy communion. [3] "Non exercuisse in collegas imperium," did not exercise authority over his colleagues.

bassages, as occasion was offered, that some might stay at Jerusalem, as in the principal standing.[1] Again, it may be that after every man had spent some time in his voyage, they were wont to assemble themselves there. It is certain, indeed, that that time which they spent at Jerusalem was not spent in idleness; and, secondly, that they were not tied to some one place, forasmuch as Christ had commanded them to go over all the world, (Mark xvi. 15.)

15. *They prayed.* Undoubtedly they taught first, for we know that they were no dumb persons; but Luke passeth over that which was common to them and Philip, and declareth only what new thing the Samaritans had by their coming, to wit, that they had the Spirit given them then.

16. But here ariseth a question, for he saith that they were only baptized into the name of Christ, and that therefore they had not as yet received the Holy Ghost; but baptism must either be in vain and without grace, or else it must have all the force which it hath from the Holy Ghost. In baptism we are washed from our sins; but Paul teacheth that our washing is the work of the Holy Ghost, (Titus iii. 5.) The water used in baptism is a sign of the blood of Christ; but Peter saith, that it is the Spirit by whom we are washed with the blood of Christ, (1 Peter i. 2.) Our old man is crucified in baptism, that we may be raised up unto newness of life, (Rom. vi. 6;) and whence cometh all this, save only from the sanctification of the Spirit? And, finally, what shall remain in baptism if it be separate from the Spirit? (Gal. iii. 27.) Therefore, we must not deny but that the Samaritans, who had put on Christ, indeed, in baptism, had also his Spirit given them; and surely Luke speaketh not in this place of the common grace of the Spirit, whereby God doth regenerate us, that we may be his children, but of those singular gifts wherewith God would have certain endued at the beginning of the gospel to beautify

[1] "Statione," station.

Christ's kingdom. Thus must the words of John be understood, that the disciples had not the Spirit given them as yet; forasmuch as Christ was yet conversant in the world; not that they were altogether destitute of the Spirit, seeing that they had from the same both faith, and a godly desire to follow Christ; but because they were not furnished with those excellent gifts, wherein appeared afterwards greater glory of Christ's kingdom. To conclude, forasmuch as the Samaritans were already endued with the Spirit of adoption, the excellent graces of the Spirit are heaped upon them, in which God showed to his Church, for a time as it were, the visible presence of his Spirit, that he might establish for ever the authority of his gospel, and also testify that his Spirit shall be always the governor and director of the faithful.

They were only baptized. We must not understand this as spoken contemptuously of baptism; but Luke's meaning is, that they were only endued then with the grace of common adoption and regeneration, which is offered to all the godly in baptism. As for this, it was an extraordinary thing that certain should have the gifts of the Spirit given them, which might serve to set forth the kingdom of Christ and the glory of the gospel; for this was the use thereof, that every one might profit the Church according to the measure of his ability. We must note this, therefore, because, while the Papists will set up their feigned confirmation, they are not afraid to break out into this sacrilegious speech, that they are but half Christians upon whom the hands have not been as yet laid. This is not tolerable now, because, whereas this was a sign which lasted only for a time, they made it a continual law in the Church, as if they had the Spirit in readiness to give to whomsoever they would. We know that when the testimony and pledge of God's grace is set before us in vain, and without the thing itself, it is too filthy mockery; but even they themselves are enforced to grant that the Church was beautified for a time only with these gifts; whereupon it followeth that the laying on of hands which the apostles used had an end when the effect ceased. I

omit that, that they added oil unto the laying on of hands, (Mark vi. 13;) but this, as I have already said, was a point of too great boldness, to prescribe a perpetual law to the Church, that that might be a general sacrament, which was peculiarly used amongst the apostles, (Galat. iii. 7; Romans vi. 6;) that the sign might continue still after that the thing itself was ceased; and with this they joined detestable blasphemy, because they said that sins were only forgiven by baptism, and that the Spirit of regeneration is given by that rotten oil which they presumed to bring in without the Word of God. The Scripture doth testify that we put on Christ in baptism, and that we are ingrafted into his body, that our old man may be crucified, and we renewed into righteousness. These sacrilegious robbers have translated that to adorn the false visor of their sacrament which they have taken from baptism.[1] Neither was this the invention of one man only, but the decree of one council, whereof they babble daily in all their schools.

17. *When they had laid their hands.* The laying on of hands followeth prayers, whereby they testify that the grace of the Spirit is not included in the external ceremony, which they crave humbly at the hands of another. And yet when they confess that God is the author, they neglect not the ceremony which was delivered them by God to this use; and because they usurp it not rashly, the effect is also annexed. This is the profit and efficacy of signs, because God worketh in them, and yet he remaineth the only giver of grace, and distributeth the same according to his good pleasure; but let us remember that the laying on of hands was the instrument of God, at such time as he gave the visible graces of the Spirit to his, and that since the Church was deprived of such riches, it is only a vain visor without any substance.[2]

[1] "Detracta baptismo spolia," the spoils taken from baptism.
[2] "Inane duntaxat esset spectrum," it was only an empty spectre.

18. *And when Simon saw that the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,*
19. *Saying, Give me also this power, that on whom I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.*
20. *And Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God is obtained with money.*
21. *Thou hast no part nor inheritance in this business; for thy heart is not right before God.*
22. *Therefore repent of this wickedness, and pray unto God, if peradventure the cogitation of thy heart may be forgiven thee.*
23. *For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of unrighteousness.*
24. *And Simon answering, said, Pray ye for me unto God, that none of these things may happen to me which ye have said.*
25. *Then when they had testified and spoken the word of God, they returned to Jerusalem, and they preached the gospel in many streets of the Samaritans.*

18. *And when Simon.* Simon's hypocrisy is now discovered, not because that he had feigned before that he believed; for when he was convicted he gave Christ his hand in earnest, like as many yield unto the gospel, lest they strive against God, but in the mean season they continue like to themselves; whereas the denial of ourselves ought to follow true faith. And this is to mix Christ with Satan, when doctrine pierceth not unto the hidden affections of the heart, but the inward uncleanness lieth hidden there.[1] Therefore God wipeth away that false colour now in Simon, lest by professing the name of Christ he deceive both himself and others. For that ambition which was hidden before breaketh out now, when as he desireth to be equal with the apostles. This is now one vice; another is, because while he thinketh that the grace of God is to be sold, he will get some greedy gain thereby.[2] Whereby it

[1] "Quasi sepulta," as it were buried. [2] "Vult eam ad lucrum prostituere," he wishes to prostitute it to gain.

appeareth that he is a profane man, and such as had not tasted the first principles of godliness; for he is touched with no desire of God's glory; yea, he doth not once think what it is to be a minister of God. As he had heretofore gotten gain by his magic, so he thought that it would be gainsome if he might give the graces of the Spirit. For undoubtedly he hunted after riches, and sought to purchase praise in the sight of the world; and he did God great injury also, because he thought that this heavenly power did nothing differ from his magical enchantments. Now we understand briefly what and how many ways Simon offended. In the gifts of the Spirit he doth not adore, neither acknowledge, the power of Christ; he doth not confess that the apostles were endued with heavenly power, to set forth Christ's glory by their ministry; his own ambition driveth and carrieth him headlong, so that he desireth to become excellent; and to make the world subject to himself, setting God apart, he will buy the Holy Ghost, as if he could be bought with money.

20. *Peter answered.* Peter giveth him the repulse here stoutly, and being not content to chide him, he addeth a bitter curse (or wish,) that Simon and his money may perish together; though he doth not so much wish unto him destruction, as he telleth him that the just vengeance of God hangeth over his head, that he might terrify him. In sum, he showeth what he hath deserved, when he hath made the Spirit of God subject to filthy buying and selling; as if he should have said, Thou art worthy to perish with thy money,[1] when thou dost so blaspheme the Spirit of God. For we may easily gather by that which followeth, that Peter would rather have had Simon saved than destroyed. But as it were supplying the place of a judge, he pronounceth what punishment Simon's ungodliness deserveth; and it was requisite that he should be thus accused with such vehemence, that he might perceive the greatness of

[1] "Nundinationi," trafficking.

his offence.[1] To the same end tendeth that, that he judged his money to perish; for he signifieth that it was as it were infected and polluted with cogitation of wickedness, because it was offered to such a wicked use. And surely we ought rather to wish that all the whole world perish, than that those things should darken the glory of God, which, in comparison thereof, are nothing worth. When he wisheth thus to a sacrilegious man, he doth not so much respect the person as the fact; for we must be offended with the offences of men in such sort, that we must pity the men themselves. Such are those sentences of God which adjudge adulterers, thieves, drunkards, and wrongful dealers, to destruction, (1 Cor. vi. 9; Eph. v. 5;) for they do not cut off all hope of salvation from them, but they are only referred unto their present state, and declare what end is prepared for them, if they go forward obstinately.

21. *Thou hast no part.* Some do frame this sentence otherwise, that Simon is not partaker of grace, because he setteth a price thereof. But the other reading which we have followed is more usual, to wit, that that reason be joined to the former member. And surely it is better to knit the two sentences together, thus, Thy money perish with thee, because thou thinkest that the inestimable gift of the Spirit can be bought with money. Whereas the old interpreter had put, *in this word;* Erasmus translated it more fitly, *in this business;* for Peter's meaning is, that that sacrilegious person hath nothing to do in all that administration, who doth wickedly profane the same.

Furthermore, both the Papists, and also the old divines, have disputed much concerning simony; but that which the Papists call simony doth not agree with Simon's fact. Simon would have bought the grace of the Spirit with money; the Papists apply the crime of simony unto their idle revenues; and yet I speak not this that I may extenuate those horrible sins which reign at this day in Popery,

[1] "Sceleris sui atrocitatem," the atrocity of his crime.

in buying and selling spiritual promotions. Now, this wickedness is filthy enough of itself, in that they hold such a mart in the Church of God. And in the mean season, we must note the true definition of simony, to wit, that it is a wicked buying and selling of the gifts of the Spirit, or some other such like thing, whilst that a man abuseth them unto ambition or other corruptions. Though I confess that all those imitate Simon who strive to attain unto the government of the Church by unlawful means; which thing we see committed at this day without shame, as if it were lawful; and we can scarce find one priest in all Popery which is not manifestly a simoniacal person in this respect; because none can put up his head amongst them,[1] but he must creep in by indirect means. Although we must confess, (which thing even children see, to our great shame,) that this vice is too common even amongst the false professors of the gospel.

But let us remember, first, to the end we may be free from the infection of Simon, that the gifts of the Spirit are not gotten with money, but that they are given of the free and mere goodness of God, and that for the edifying of the Church; that is, that every man may study to help his brethren according to the measure of his ability; that every man may bestow[2] that about the common good of the Church which he hath received; and that the excellency of no man may hinder, but that Christ may excel all. Notwithstanding, it may seem a marvellous matter, that Peter excludeth Simon from being a partaker of the Spirit, as concerning special gifts; because his heart is not right before God. For the wickedness of Judas did not let him from having the gifts of the Spirit in great measure; neither had the gifts of the Spirit been so corrupted amongst the Corinthians, if their heart had been right in the sight of God. Therefore that reason which Peter allegeth seemeth insufficient; because many men excel oftentimes in the gifts

[1] "Quando nullus illuc emergere potest," since no man can rise there.
[2] "Modeste conferat," may modestly bestow.

of the Spirit, who have an unclean heart. But, first of all, there followeth no absurdity, if God give such graces to men which are unworthy thereof. Secondly, Peter prescribeth no general rule in this place, but because the Church alone is for the most part made partaker of the gifts of the Spirit, he pronounceth that Simon, who is a stranger to Christ, is unworthy to have the same graces given him, (which are bestowed upon the faithful,) as if he were one of God's household. Moreover, he had blasphemed those gifts whereof he is deprived.

22. *Repent, therefore.* Whereas he exhorteth him unto repentance and prayer, he putteth him in some hope of pardon thereby; for no man shall ever be touched with any desire of repentance, save only he which shall believe that God will have mercy upon him; on the other side, despair will always carry men headlong unto boldness. Furthermore, the Scripture teacheth that God is not called upon aright save only by faith. Therefore, we see how Peter raiseth up Simon now unto hope of salvation, whom he had thrown down before with the cruel lightnings and thunderbolts of words; and yet Simon's sin was no small sin. But, if it could be, we ought to pluck men even out of hell.

Therefore, until such time as even the most wicked men do by manifest signs bewray themselves to be reprobates, no one of them is to be handled so sharply but that remission of sins is to be set before him. Yea, we must so deal with those for whom sharp chiding is profitable, by reason of their hardness and stubbornness, that we throw them down with one hand, and set them on foot with the other; for the Spirit of God doth not suffer us to accurse them.[1] But Peter seemeth to bring him into some fear and doubt, when he saith, *if peradventure.* And the Papists go about to prove by this place and such like, that we must pray with doubtful minds; because men may unadvisedly

[1] "Anathemate ferire," to strike with anathema.

promise themselves certain success in their petitions. But we may readily answer them; for the word εἰ ἄρα signifieth as much as if a man should say, If by any means thou must obtain pardon of God. Peter useth this word, not that he may leave Simon's mind in a perplexity, but that he may the more prick him forward to be earnest in prayer. For the very difficulty doth not a little serve to stir us up; because when we see the thing at hand, we are too careless and sluggish. Therefore Peter doth not terrify Simon, that he may overthrow or trouble all hope of obtaining in his heart, but putting him in sure hope if he shall crave pardon humbly and from his heart, he telleth him only that pardon is hard to be gotten, by reason of the greatness of his offence, to the end he may provoke him unto ferventness; for it is requisite that we may be lightened by faith when we go unto God, yea, that she be the mother of prayer.

23. *In the gall of bitterness.* Peter doth sharply reprove Simon again, and striketh him with God's judgment. For unless he had been compelled to descend into himself, he would never have been turned in good earnest unto God. For there is nothing more deadly for men which are blockish than when we flatter them, or when we do but a little scrape the skin, whereas they ought rather to be thrust through. Therefore, until such time as a sinner shall conceive sorrow and true heaviness by reason of his sin, we must use such severity as may wound his mind; otherwise the rotten sore shall be nourished within, which shall by little and little consume the man himself. Yet let us always observe this mean, that we provide for men's salvation so much as in us lieth. Moreover, there be two excellent fine metaphors in Peter's words; the one whereof seemeth to be taken out of Moses, where he forbiddeth that there be not in us any root, from which springeth gall and wormwood, (Deut. xxix.) By which speech is noted the inward wickedness of the heart; when as it hath so conceived the poison of ungodliness, that being therewith infected, it can bring

forth nothing but bitterness. To the same end tendeth the binding of iniquity: to wit, when the whole heart is kept bound and tied by Satan. For it falleth out sometimes that men which are otherwise given very godlily, do break out into evil works, who have not their heart corrupt inwardly with poison. We know that hypocrisy is engendered in man's nature; but when as the Spirit of God doth shine, we are so blinded in our vices, that we nourish them within as if it were some hidden bundle. Therefore Peter's meaning is, that Simon fell not only in one point, but that his very heart root was corrupt and bitter; that he fell into Satan's snares not only in one kind of sin, but that all his senses were ensnared, so that he was wholly given over to Satan, and was become the bond-slave of iniquity. In the mean season, we are taught that the greatness of offences is esteemed not so much according to the fact[1] which appeareth, as according to the affection of the heart.

24. *Simon answered.* Hereby we gather that he did not so take that which Peter had threatened unto him, but that he did consider that his salvation was sought. And though Peter alone spake, yet he attributeth the speech unto all by reason of the consent. Now ariseth a question what we ought to think of Simon. The Scripture carrieth us no farther, save only unto a conjecture. Whereas he yieldeth when he is reproved, and being touched with the feeling of his sin, feareth the judgment of God; and that done, flieth unto the mercy of God, and commendeth himself to the prayers of the Church; these are assuredly no small signs of repentance; therefore we may conjecture that he repented. And yet the old writers affirm with one consent, that he was a great enemy to Peter afterward, and that he disputed with him by the space of three days at Rome. The disputation is also extant in writing under the name of Clement, but it hath in it such filthy dotings, that it is a wonder that Christian ears can abide to hear

[1] "Flagitio," flagitiousness.

them. Again, Augustine, writing to Januarius, saith, that there were divers and false rumours spread abroad in Rome in his time concerning that matter. Wherefore, nothing is more safe than bidding adieu to uncertain opinions, simply to embrace that which is set down in the Scriptures. That which we read elsewhere of Simon may justly be suspected for many causes.

25. *And they testified.* In these words Luke teacheth that Peter and John came not only that they might enrich the Samaritans with the gifts of the Spirit, but also that they might establish them in the faith which they had already received, by approving Philip's doctrine. For thus much doth the word *testify* import; as if he should say, that it came to pass by their testimony, that the word of God had full and perfect authority, and that the truth was of force, as being well testified and authentic. Notwithstanding Luke teacheth therewithal that they were faithful witnesses of God, when he addeth that they uttered the word of God. This was, therefore, the sum of the apostles' doctrine, faithfully to utter those things which they had learned of the Lord, and not their own inventions, or the inventions of any man else. He saith, that they did this not only in the city, but also in villages. Therefore we see that they were so inflamed to further the glory of Christ, that whithersoever they came they had him in their mouth. So that the seed of life began to be sown throughout the whole region, after that it was preached in the city.[1]

26. *And an angel of the Lord spake to Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, to the way which goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza; it is waste.*

27. *And when he arose, he went. And, behold, a man, an Ethiopian, an eunuch, a man of great authority with Candace, queen of Ethiopia, which had the rule of all her treasure, which came* [had come] *to Jerusalem to worship:*

[1] "Ab una urbe," from one city.

28. *And as he returned, and sat in his chariot, he read Esaias the prophet.*
29. *And the Spirit said to Philip, Draw near, and be thou joined to this chariot.*
30. *And as Philip ran unto it, he heard him reading the prophet Esaias, and he said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*
31. *He said, How can I, unless some man direct me? And he requested Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*

26. *And the angel.* Luke passeth over unto a new history, to wit, how the gospel came even unto the Ethiopians. For though he reporteth there was but one man converted unto the faith of Christ, yet because his authority and power was great in all the realm, his faith might spread abroad a sweet smell far and wide. For we know that the gospel grew of small beginnings; and therein appeared the power of the Spirit more plainly, in that one grain of seed did fill a whole country in a small space. Philip is first commanded by the angel to go toward the south; the angel telleth him not to what end. And thus doth God oftentimes use to deal with those that be his, to prove their obedience. He showeth what he will have them to do; he commandeth them to do this or that, but he keepeth the success hidden with himself. Therefore let us be content with the commandment[1] of God alone, although the reason of that which he enjoineth, or the fruit of obedience, appear not by and by.[2] For although this be not plainly expressed, yet all the commandments of God contain a hidden promise, that so often as we obey him, all that work which we take in hand must needs fall out well. Moreover, this ought to be sufficient for us, that God doth allow our studies, when as we take nothing in hand rashly or without his commandment. If any man object, that angels come not down daily from heaven to reveal unto us what we ought to do, the answer is ready, that we are sufficiently

1 "Simplici Dei imperio," with the simple command of God.
2 "Statim," instantly.

taught in the Word of God what we ought to do, and that they are never destitute of counsel who ask it of him,[1] and submit themselves to the government of the Spirit. Therefore nothing doth hinder and keep us back from being ready to follow God, save only our own slothfulness and coldness[2] in prayer.

To the way which goeth down to Gaza. All the learned grant that that is called Gaza here which the Hebrews call *Haza*. Wherefore, Pomponius Mela is deceived, who saith that Cambyses, king of Persia, called that city by this name, because when he made war against the Egyptians, he had his riches laid up there. It is true, indeed, that the Persians call treasure or plenty, *Gaza;* and Luke useth this word shortly after in this sense, when as he saith that the eunuch was the chief governor of the treasure of Candace; but because that Hebrew word was used before such time as Cambyses was born, I do not think but that it was corrupt afterwards, the letter ח (*heth*) being changed into *g*, which thing we see was done in all others almost. The epitheton *waste* is added for this cause, because Alexander of Macedonia laid waste that old Gaza. Also Luke refuteth those who make Constantinus the builder of the second and new Gaza, who affirmeth that it was an hundred and fifty years before; but it may be that he beautified and enlarged the city after it was built. And all men confess that this new Gaza was situate on the sea-coast, distant twenty furlongs from the old city.

27. *Behold, a man, an Ethiopian.* He calleth him a man, who he saith shortly after was an eunuch; but because kings and queens in the East were wont to appoint eunuchs over their weighty affairs, thereby it came to pass that lords of great power were called generally[3] eunuchs, whereas, notwithstanding, they were men. Furthermore, Philip findeth indeed, now at length, that he did not obey God in

[1] "Illius os," at his mouth. [2] "Incuria," carelessness. [3] "Promiscue," promiscuously.

vain. Therefore, whosoever committeth the success to God, and goeth on forward thither whither he biddeth him, he shall at length try[1] that all that falleth out well which is taken in hand at his appointment.[2] The name *Candace* was not the name of one queen only; but as all the emperors of Rome were called Cæsars, so the Ethiopians, as Pliny witnesseth, called their queens *Candaces*. This maketh also unto the matter that the writers of histories report that that was a noble and wealthy kingdom, because it may the better be gathered by the royalty and power thereof how gorgeous the condition and dignity of the eunuch was. The head and principal place[3] was Meroe. The profane writers agree with Luke, who report that women used to reign there.

Came [had come] *to worship.* Hereby we gather that the name of the true God was spread far abroad, seeing he had some worshippers in far countries. Certes, it must needs be that this man did openly profess another worship than his nation; for so great a lord could not come into Judea by stealth, and undoubtedly he brought with him a great train. And no marvel if there were some everywhere in the East parts which worshipped the true God, because that after the people were scattered abroad, there was also some smell[4] of the knowledge of the true God spread abroad with them throughout foreign countries; yea, the banishment[5] of the people was a spreading abroad of true godliness. Also, we see that though the Romans did condemn the Jewish religion with many cruel edicts, yet could they not bring to pass but that many, even on [in] heaps, would profess the same.[6] These were certain beginnings[7] of the calling of the Gentiles, until such time as Christ, having with the brightness of his coming put away the shadows of the

[1] "Experietur," will experience. [2] "Ejus auspiciis et mandato," under his auspices, and by his command. [3] "Primaria sedes," metropolis. [4] "Odor," savour. [5] "Exilium populi," the exile of the people, the captivity of the Jews. [6] "Turmatim multi ad eam transirent," from going over, becoming proselytes, to it in crowds. [7] "Præludia," preludes to.

law, might take away the difference which was between the Jews and the Gentiles; and having pulled down the wall of separation, he might gather together from all parts the children of God, (Eph. ii. 14.)

Whereas the eunuch came to Jerusalem to worship, it must not be accounted any superstition. He might, indeed, have called[1] upon God in his own country, but this man would not omit the exercises which were prescribed to the worshippers of God; and, therefore, this was his purpose, not only to nourish faith privily[2] in his heart, but also to make profession of the same amongst men. And yet, notwithstanding, he could not be so divorced[3] from his nation, but that he might well know that he should be hated of many. But he made more account of the external profession of religion, which he knew God did require, than of the favour of men. And if such a small sparkle of the knowledge of the law did so shine in him, what a shame were it for us to choke the perfect light of the gospel with unfaithful silence? If any do object that the sacrifices were even then abrogated, and that now the time was come wherein God would be called upon everywhere without difference of place, we may easily answer, that those to whom the truth of the gospel was not yet revealed, were retained in the shadows of the law without any superstition. For whereas it is said that the law was abolished by Christ, as concerning the ceremonies, it is thus to be understood, that where Christ showeth himself plainly, those rites vanish away which prefigured him when he was absent. Whereas the Lord suffered the eunuch to come to Jerusalem before he sent him a teacher, it is to be thought that it was done for this cause, because it was profitable that he should yet be framed by the rudiments of the law, that he might be made more apt afterward to receive the doctrine of the gospel. And whereas God sent none of the apostles unto him[4]

[1] "Deum precari," have prayed to God. [2] "Et clanculum," and stealthily, omitted. [3] "Divortium facere," differ from. [4] "Neminem ex apostolis illi Deus obtulerit," God cast none of the apostles in his way.

at Jerusalem, the cause lieth hid in his secret counsel, unless, peradventure, it were done that he might make more account of the gospel, as of some treasure found suddenly, and offered unto him contrary to hope; or because it was better that Christ should be set before him, after that being separated and withdrawn from the external pomp of ceremonies and the beholding of the temple, he sought the way of salvation quietly at such time as he was at rest.[1]

28. *He read Esaias.* The reading of the prophet showeth that the eunuch did not worship a God unadvisedly, according to the understanding of his own head, whom he had feigned to himself, but whom he knew by the doctrine of the law. And surely this is the right way to worship God, not to snatch at bare and vain rites, but to adjoin the word thereunto, otherwise there shall be nothing but that which cometh by chance and is confused. And certainly the form of worshipping prescribed in the law differeth nothing from the inventions of men, save only because God giveth light there by his word. Therefore, those which are God's scholars do worship aright only, that is, those who are taught in his school. But he seemeth to lose his labour when he readeth without profit. For he confesseth that he cannot understand the prophet's meaning, unless he be helped by some other teacher. I answer, as he read the prophet with a desire to learn, so he hoped for some fruit, and he found it indeed. Therefore, why doth he deny that he can understand the place which he had in hand? For because[2] he manifestly confesseth his ignorance in darker places. There be many things in Isaiah which need no long exposition, as when he preacheth of the goodness and power of God, partly that he may invite men unto faith, partly that he may exhort and teach them to lead a godly life. Therefore, no man shall be so rude an idiot[3] which shall not profit somewhat by reading that book, and yet, notwith-

[1] "Liberius in otio et quiete," more freely in ease and quiet, [2] "Nempe . . . agnoscit," namely, he acknowledgeth. [3] "Idiota," unlearned.

standing, he shall, peradventure, scarce understand every tenth verse. Such was the eunuch's reading. For seeing that, according to his capacity, he gathered those things which served to edification, he had some certain profit by his studies. Nevertheless, though he were ignorant of many things,[1] yet was he not wearied, so that he did cast away the book. Thus must we also read the Scriptures. We must greedily, and with a prompt mind, receive those things which are plain, and wherein God openeth his mind. As for those things which are hid from us, we must pass them over until we see greater light. And if we be not wearied with reading, it shall at length come to pass that the Scripture shall be made more familiar by continual use.

31. *How should I?* Most excellent modesty of the eunuch, who doth not only permit Philip, who was one of the common sort, to question with him, but doth also willingly[2] confess his ignorance. And surely we must never hope that he will ever show himself apt to be taught who is puffed up with the confidence of his own wit. Hereby it cometh to pass that the reading of the Scriptures doth profit so few at this day, because we can scarce find one amongst a hundred who submitteth himself willingly to learn. For whilst all men almost are ashamed to be ignorant of that whereof they are ignorant, every man had rather proudly nourish his ignorance than seem to be scholar to other men. Yea, a great many take upon them haughtily to teach other men. Nevertheless, let us remember that the eunuch did so confess his ignorance, that yet, notwithstanding, he was one of God's scholars when he read the Scripture. This is the true reverence of the Scripture, when as we acknowledge that there is that wisdom laid up there which surpasseth[3] all our senses; and yet, notwithstanding, we do not loathe it, but, reading diligently, we depend upon the revelation of the Spirit, and desire to have an interpreter given us.

[1] "Si multa eum latebant," though many things escaped him, were hidden from him. [2] "Ultro et ingenue," spontaneously and ingenuously.
[3] "Superet ac fugiat," surpasses and escapes.

He prayed Philip that he would come up. This is another token of modesty, that he seeketh an interpreter and teacher. He might have rejected Philip according to the pride of rich men; for it was a certain secret upbraiding of ignorance when Philip said, *Understandest thou what thou readest?* But rich men think that they have great injury done them if any man speak homely to them. And, therefore, they break out by and by into these speeches, What is that to thee? or, What hast thou to do with me? But the eunuch submitteth himself humbly to Philip, that by him he may be taught. Thus must we be minded if we desire to have God to be our teacher, whose Spirit resteth upon the humble and meek, (Isaiah lxvi. 2.) And if any man, mistrusting himself, submit himself to be taught, the angels shall rather come down from heaven[1] than the Lord will suffer us to labour in vain; though (as did the eunuch) we must use all helps, which the Lord offereth unto us, for the understanding of the Scriptures. Frantic men require inspirations and revelations[2] from heaven, and, in the mean season, they contemn the minister of God, by whose hand they ought to be governed. Other some, which trust too much to their own wit, will vouchsafe to hear no man, and they will read no commentaries. But God will not have us to despise those helps which he offereth unto us, and he suffereth not those to escape scot free which despise the same. And here we must remember, that the Scripture is not only given us, but that interpreters and teachers are also added, to be helps to us. For this cause the Lord sent rather Philip than an angel to the eunuch. For to what end served this circuit, that God calleth Philip by the voice of the angel, and sendeth not the angel himself forthwith, save only because he would accustom us to hear men? This is, assuredly, no small commendation of external preaching, that the voice of God soundeth in the mouth of men to our salvation, when angels hold their peace. Concerning which thing, I will speak more upon the ninth and tenth chapters.

[1] "Ad nos docendos," to teach us, omitted.

[2] "Ἐνθουσιασμούς," enthusiasms or inspirations.

32. *Furthermore, the sentence of Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to be slain, and as a lamb dumb before the shearer, so opened he not his mouth.*
33. *In his humility his judgment is exalted. Who shall declare his generation? because his life is taken from the earth.*
34. *And the eunuch answering Philip said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other?*
35. *And Philip opening his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.*

32. *The sentence of Scripture.* It is properly a text or *period.* Let us know that he lighted not upon this place by chance, but that it came to pass by the wonderful providence of God, that Philip should have a proposition or principle from which the whole sum of Christianity might be set.[1] Therefore, first, he hath matter of full instruction brought to his hand by the secret direction of the Spirit; secondly, the form is plainly applied to the ministry of man. This is an excellent prophecy of Christ, and above all others to be remembered; because Isaiah saith plainly there[2] that such should be the manner of redeeming the Church, that the Son of God do by his death purchase life for men, that he offereth himself in sacrifice to purge[3] men's sins, that he be punished with the hand of God, and that he go down even unto the very hell, that he may exalt us unto heaven, having delivered us from destruction. In sum, this place teacheth plainly how men are reconciled to God, how they obtain righteousness, how they come to the kingdom of God, being delivered from the tyranny of Satan, and loosed from the yoke of sin; to be brief, whence they must fetch all parts of their salvation.

Notwithstanding, I will only expound those things which Luke here citeth, and there be, indeed, two members. In the former, he teacheth that Christ, to the end he may redeem the Church,[4] must needs be so broken, that he appear

[1] "Apte deduci," aptly deduced. [2] "Sine involucris," without circumlocution, unequivocally. [3] "Expiandis," to expiate. [4] "Et restituat in vitam," and restore her to life, omitted.

like to a man which is cast down and past hope. Secondly, he affirmeth that his death shall give life, and that there shall a singular triumph issue out of great despair. Whereas he compareth Christ to a lamb, which suffereth itself to be led and slain, and to a sheep, which offereth herself meekly to be shorn; his meaning is, that the sacrifice of Christ shall be voluntary. And surely this was the way to appease God's wrath, in that he showed himself obedient. He spake, indeed, before Pilate, (John xviii. 34, 36,) but not to save his life, but rather that he might willingly offer himself to die,[1] as he was appointed by the Father, and so might bring that punishment upon himself which was prepared for us. Therefore the prophet teacheth both things, that Christ must needs have suffered that he might purchase life for us, and that he was to suffer death willingly, that he might blot out the stubbornness of men by his obedience. And hence must we gather an exhortation unto godliness,[2] as Peter doth; but that doctrine of faith which I have already touched is former[3] in order.

33. *In his humility his judgment.* The eunuch had either the Greek volume, or else Luke did set down the reading which was then used, as he useth to do. The prophet saith that Christ was exalted out of sorrow and judgment, by which words he signifieth a wonderful victory, which immediately ensued his casting down. For if he had been oppressed with death, there could nothing have been hoped for at his hands.

Therefore, to the end the prophet may establish our faith in Christ, after that he had described him to be stricken with the hand of God, and to be subject to be slain,[4] he putteth upon him a new person now; to wit, that he cometh up out of the depth of death as a conqueror, and out of the very hell, being the author of eternal life. I know, indeed,

[1] "In victimam," as a victim. [2] "Ad patientiam," to patience. [3] "Præcedit," precedes. [4] "Et mactationi subjectum," and subjected to slaughter.

that this place is diversely expounded. Some there be which understand by this, that he was carried from the prison to the cross; other some there be who think that to *be taken away* doth signify as much as to be brought to nought. And, indeed, the signification of the Hebrew word לחה (*lachah*) is doubtful,[1] as is also the signification of the Greek word αιρεσθαι. But he which shall thoroughly weigh the text, [context,] shall agree with me in that which I have said, that he passeth now from that doleful and unseemly sight which he had set before our eyes, unto the new beginning of unlooked-for glory. Therefore the Greek interpretation differeth not much from the words of the prophet in the sum of the matter. For Christ's judgment was exalted in his humility or casting down; because at such time as he might seem to be cast down and oppressed, the Father maintained his cause. After this sort *judgment* shall be taken in this place (as in many other) for *right*. But it signifieth *condemnation* in the Hebrew text. For the prophet saith, that after that Christ shall be brought into great straits, and shall be like unto a condemned and lost man, he shall be lifted up by the hand of the Father. Therefore the meaning of the words is, that Christ must first have suffered death, before the Father should exalt him unto the glory of his kingdom; which doctrine must be translated unto the whole body of the Church; because all the godly ought wonderfully to be lifted up with the hand of God, that they be not swallowed up of death. But when God appeareth to be the revenger of his, he doth not only restore them to life, but also getteth to them excellent triumphs of many deaths, as Christ did triumph most gloriously upon the cross; whereof the apostle maketh mention in the 2d chapter to the Colossians.

His generation. After that the prophet hath set forth the victorious death of Christ, he addeth now that his victory shall not last only for a small time, but shall go beyond all number of years. For the exclamation of the prophet im-

[1] "Ambigua," ambiguous, equivocal.

porteth as much as if he should deny that the perpetuity of Christ's kingdom can be expressed by the tongue of men. But interpreters have wrested this place miserably. Whereas the old writers have endeavoured hereby to prove the Eternal Generation of the Word of God against Arius, it is too far dissenting from the prophet's mind. Chrysostom's exposition is never a whit truer, who referreth it unto the human generation. Neither do they understand the prophet's meaning, which suppose that he inveigheth against the men of that age. Other some think better, who take it to be spoken of the Church, save only that they are deceived in the word *generation*, which they think doth signify a posterity or issue. But the word דר, (*dor*,) which the prophet useth, signifieth, amongst the Hebrews, *an age*, or the continuance of man's life. Therefore, undoubtedly this is the prophet's meaning, that Christ's life shall endure for ever, when as he shall be once delivered by his Father's grace from death; although this life, which is without end, appertaineth unto the whole body of the Church; because Christ rose, not that he may live for himself, but for us. Therefore, he extolleth now in the members[1] the fruit and effect of that victory which he placed in the Head. Wherefore every one of the faithful may conceive sure hope of eternal life out of this place; secondly, the perpetuity of the Church is rather avouched in the person of Christ.

Because his life is taken from the earth. This is, to look to, (to be) a very absurd reason, that Christ doth reign with such renown in heaven and earth, because he was cut off. For who can believe that death is the cause of life? But this was done by the wonderful counsel of God, that hell should be a ladder, whereby Christ should ascend into heaven; that reproach should be unto him a passage into life; that the joyful brightness of salvation should appear out of the horror and darkness of the cross; that blessed immortality should flow from the deep pit of death. Because he humbled himself, therefore the Father exalted him, that

[1] "In membris omnibus," in all the members.

every knee may bow before him, (Philipp. ii. 10,) &c. Now must we bethink ourselves what fellowship we have with Christ, that it may not be troublesome to any to go the same way.

34. *The eunuch said to Philip.* Here it appeareth what an earnest desire the eunuch had to learn. He wandereth in divers prophecies of Isaiah as through doubtful boughts,[1] and yet he is not weary of reading. And whilst that he arrogateth nothing to himself, he getteth far more, contrary to his hope, even at a sudden, than he could get during his whole life by taking great pains, if he had brought all his quickness of wit. So the Lord will be unto us a Master, though we be but small, if, acknowledging our ignorance, we be not loth to submit ourselves to learn. And as the seed, covered with earth, lieth hid for a time, so the Lord will illuminate us by his Spirit, and will cause that reading which, being barren and void of fruit, causeth nothing but wearisomeness, to have plain light of understanding. The Lord doth never keep the eyes of his so shut, but that so soon as they are once entered, the way of salvation appeareth unto them in the Scripture; but that they profit ever now and then a little by reading. Yet doth he suffer them to stick fast oftentimes, and permitteth their course to be hindered by some bar which is laid in the way, both that he may try patience of faith in them, and also that he may teach them humility, by putting them in mind of their ignorance, that he may make them more attentive after that they have shaken off drowsiness; that he may make them more fervent in prayer; that he may prick them forward to love the truth more dearly; that he may set forth the excellence of his heavenly wisdom, which is otherwise not so esteemed as it ought. But howsoever the faithful do not attain unto the mark of perfect knowledge, yet they shall always perceive that their labour is not in vain, so that they stop not the way before themselves with proud loathsomeness.[2] Let

[1] "Per dubias ambages," through dubious, winding paths. [2] "Superbo fastidio," by proud disdain, fastidiousness.

this going forward suffice us until the time of full revelation do come, that even a small taste of knowledge doth drip[1] into us the fear of God and faith.

35. *Philip, opening his mouth.* To open the mouth is taken in Scripture for, to begin a long speech concerning some grave and weighty matter. Therefore Luke's meaning is, that Philip began to intreat [discourse] of Christ, as it were, with full mouth. He saith that he began with this prophecy, because there is no one which depainteth out Christ more lively;[2] and it was then brought[3] to his hand. Therefore, after that Philip had showed, by the prophet's words, after what sort Christ should come, and what was to be hoped for at his hands, he conferred the thing itself afterward, that the eunuch might know that that Christ which was promised was already revealed and given, and that he might understand his power. Where we translate it, that *he preached Christ*, Luke saith that he preached the gospel. The sense is, that he taught that of Christ which he uttered in his gospel himself, and commanded to be taught; whereby we gather, that when Christ is known, we have the sum of the gospel.

36. *And as they went on the way, they came to a water. And the eunuch said, Lo, here is water, what letteth me to be baptized?*

37. *And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. He answering, said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

38. *Then he commanded the chariot to be stayed, and they went both down into the water; to wit, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.*

39. *And when they were come out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more. Therefore, he went on in his way rejoicing.*

40. *But Philip was found at Azotus; and, going on his journey,*

[1] "Instillat," instil. [2] "Clarius," more clearly. [3] "Commode," conveniently, omitted.

he preached the gospel to all cities, until he came to Cesarea.

36. *What letteth me?* The eunuch's baptism ensueth now, whence we gather how greatly he profited in a small time, seeing he offereth himself willingly to give Christ his name. For it must needs be that faith was after a sort ripe in his heart, seeing that he brake out into external profession with such desire. I like not that which Chrysostom noteth, that he was kept back with modesty from requiring baptism plainly; for that interrogation hath greater vehemency than if he should simply have said to Philip, I will have thee to baptize me. But we see that Christ was preached to him in such sort, that he knew that baptism was a sign of new life in him, and that therefore he would not neglect the same, because it was added to the word, and such an addition as was inseparable. Therefore, as he embraced that willingly which he heard concerning Christ, so now he breaketh out with a godly zeal into the external confession of faith; neither doth he think it sufficient for him to believe inwardly before God, unless he testifieth before men that he is a Christian. There might many things have come into his mind, which might have kept him back from being baptized, lest that he should lay himself open to the hatred and rebukes both of the queen, and also of the whole nation. But he denieth that any of these things doth hinder him from desiring to be numbered amongst the disciples of Christ. If being instructed but a few hours he came to this point, how filthy is the sluggishness of those men who suppress the faith which they have conceived, having been taught five, ten, or twenty years?

If thou believest with all thy heart. Whereas the eunuch is not admitted to baptism, until he have made confession of his faith, we must fetch a general rule hence, That those ought [not] to be received into the Church, who were estranged from the same before, until they have testified that they believe in Christ. For baptism is, as it were, an appurtenance of faith, and therefore it is later in order.

Secondly, if it be given without faith whose seal it is, it is both a wicked and also too gross a profaning. But frantic fellows do both unskilfully and also wickedly impugn baptizing of infants under colour hereof. Why was it meet that faith should go before baptism in the eunuch? To wit, because seeing that Christ marketh those alone which are of the household of the Church with this note and mark, they must be ingrafted unto the Church who are to be baptized. And as it is certain that those who are grown up are ingrafted by faith, so I say that the children of the godly are born the children of the Church, and that they are accounted members of Christ from the womb, because God adopteth us upon this condition, that he may be also the Father of our seed. Therefore, though faith be requisite in those which are grown up, yet this is untruly translated unto infants whose estate is far unlike. But certain great men have abused this place, when as they would prove that faith hath no confirmation by baptism. For they reasoned thus, The eunuch is commanded to bring perfect faith unto baptism, therefore there could nothing be added. But the Scripture taketh the *whole* heart oftentimes for a *sincere* and unfeigned heart, whose opposite is a double heart. So that there is no cause why we should imagine that they believe perfectly who believe with the whole heart, seeing that there may be a weak and faint faith in him who shall, notwithstanding, have a sound mind, and a mind free from all hypocrisy. Thus must we take that which David saith, That he loveth the Lord with all his heart. Philip had, indeed, baptized the Samaritans before, and yet he knew that they were yet far from the mark. Therefore, the faith of the whole heart is that which, having living roots in the heart, doth yet notwithstanding desire to increase daily.

I believe that Jesus Christ. As baptism is grounded in Christ, and as the truth and force thereof is contained there, so the eunuch setteth Christ alone before his eyes. The eunuch knew before that there was one God, who had made the covenant with Abraham, who gave the law by the hand of Moses, which separated one people from the

other nations, who promised Christ, through whom he would be merciful to the world. Now he confesseth that Jesus Christ is that Redeemer of the world, and *the Son of God;* under which title he comprehendeth briefly all those things which the Scripture attributeth to Christ. This is the perfect faith whereof Philip spake of late, which receiveth Christ, both as he was promised in times past, and also showed at length, and that with the earnest affection of the heart, as Paul will not have this faith to be feigned. Whosoever hath not this when he is grown up, in vain doth he boast of the baptism of his infancy. For to this end doth Christ admit infants by baptism, that so soon as the capacity of their age shall suffer, they may addict themselves to be his disciples, and that being baptized with the Holy Ghost, they may comprehend, with the understanding of faith, his power which baptism doth prefigure.

38. *They went down into the water.* Here we see the rite used among the men of old time in baptism; for they put all the body into the water. Now the use is this, that the minister doth only sprinkle the body or the head. But we ought not to stand so much about such a small difference of a ceremony, that we should therefore divide the Church, or trouble the same with brawls. We ought rather to fight even an hundred times to death for the ceremony itself of baptism, inasmuch as it was delivered us by Christ, than that we should suffer the same to be taken from us. But forasmuch as we have as well a testimony of our washing, as of newness of life, in the figure of water; forasmuch as Christ representeth unto us his blood in the water as in a glass, that we may fet[1] our cleanness thence; forasmuch as he teacheth that we are fashioned again by his Spirit, that being dead to sin, we may live to righteousness; it is certain that we want nothing which maketh to the substance of baptism. Wherefore the Church did grant liberty to herself, since the beginning, to change the rites

[1] "Petamus," seek.

somewhat, excepting this substance. For some dipped them thrice, some but once. Wherefore there is no case why we should be so strait-laced in matters which are of no such weight;[1] so that external pomp do no whit pollute the simple institution of Christ.

39. *When they were come up.* To the end Luke may at length conclude his speech concerning the eunuch, he saith that Philip was caught away out of his sight. And that was of no small weight to confirm him, forasmuch as he saw that that man was sent unto him by God like to an angel, and that he vanished away before he could offer him any reward for all his pains; whence he might gather that it was no gainful insinuation, seeing that he was vanished away before he had one halfpenny given him. Whereas Philip had no reward at the eunuch's hand, let the servants of Christ learn hereby to serve him freely, or rather let them so serve men for nothing that they hope for a reward from heaven. The Lord granteth leave, indeed, to the ministers of the gospel to receive a reward at their hands whom they teach, (1 Cor. ix. 9,) but he forbiddeth them therewithal to be hirelings which labour for lucre's sake, (John x. 12, 13.) For this must be the mark whereat they must shoot, to gain the men themselves to God.

Rejoicing. Faith and the knowledge of God bring forth this fruit always of themselves. For what truer matter of joy can be invented than when the Lord doth not only set open unto us the treasures of his mercy, but poureth out his heart into us, (that I may so speak,) and giveth us himself in his Son, that we may want nothing to perfect felicity? The heavens begin to look clear, and the earth beginneth to be quiet then; the conscience being then delivered from the doleful and horrible feelings of God's wrath, being loosed from the tyranny of Satan, escaping out of the darkness of death, beholdeth the light of life. Therefore it is a solemn thing amongst the prophets to ex-

[1] "Non ita necessariis," not absolutely necessary.

hort us to be joyful and to triumph, so often as they are about to speak of the kingdom of Christ. But because those men whose minds are possessed with the vain joys of the world, cannot lift up themselves unto this spiritual joy, let us learn to despise the world and all vain delights thereof, that Christ may make us merry indeed.

40. *He was found at Azotus.* It is well known, out of the book of Joshua, chap. xi. 22, that Azotus was one of the cities out of which the sons of Anak could not be expelled. It is distant from Ascalon almost two hundred furlongs; the Hebrews call it Ashdod. Thither was Philip carried; there began he to take his journey on foot after the manner of men, sowing the seed of the gospel wheresoever he became, [passed.] This is surely rare and wonderful stoutness,[1] that he spreadeth the name of godliness in his journey. And whereas Luke saith expressly that he preached in all cities until he came to Cesarea, and doth not declare that he returned to Samaria, we may thereby conjecture that he staid at Cesarea for a time; and yet I leave this indifferent,

CHAPTER IX.

1. *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the highest priest,*
2. *Required epistles of him to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he should find any of this sect, whether they were men or women, he might carry them bound to Jerusalem.*
3. *And as he was in the way, it happened that he drew near to Damascus: and suddenly there shined a light about hi from heaven:*

[1] "Strenuitas," strenuousness, activity.

4. *And falling flat to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*
5. *And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against pricks.*

1. *And Saul.* Luke setteth down in this place a noble history, and a history full well worthy to be remembered, concerning the conversion of Paul; after what sort the Lord did not only bring him under, and make him subject to his commandment, when he raged like an untamed beast, but also how he made him another and a new man. But because Luke setteth down all things in order as in a famous work of God, it shall be more convenient to follow his text, [context,] that all may come in order whatsoever is worth the noting. When as he saith, that *he breathed out threatenings and slaughter as yet,* his meaning is, that after that his hands were once imbued with innocent blood, he proceeded in like cruelty, and was always a furious and bloody enemy to the Church, after that he had once made that entrance[1] whereof mention is made in the death of Stephen. For which cause it was the more incredible that he could be so suddenly tamed. And whereas such a cruel wolf was not only turned into a sheep, but did also put on the nature of a shepherd, the wonderful hand of God did show itself therein manifestly.

2. And Luke describeth therewithal that he was furnished with weapons and power to do hurt, when as he saith that he had *obtained* letters of the highest priest, that he might bring all those bound to Jerusalem whom he should find professing the name of Christ. There is mention made of women, that it may the better appear how desirous he was to shed blood who had no respect of sex whom even armed enemies are wont to spare in the heat of war. Therefore he setteth forth before us a fierce and

[1] "Ab infausto trocinio," from that ominous commencement.

cruel beast who had not only liberty given him to rage, but had also his power increased to devour and destroy godly men, as if a madman had a sword put into his hand. Whereas I have translated it *sect*, Luke hath *way*, which metaphor is common enough in the Scriptures. Therefore Paul's purpose was quite to put out the name of Christ by destroying all the godly cruelly.

3. *As he was in the way.* In craving epistles of the high priest, he ran headlong against Christ willingly; and now he is enforced to obey whether he will or no. This is surely the most excellent mercy of God, in that that man is reclaimed unto salvation contrary to the purpose of his mind, whom so great a heat carried headlong into destruction. Whereas the Lord suffereth him to receive letters, and to come near to the city; (whereby we see how well he knoweth the very instants of times to do everything in due time;[1]) he could have prevented him sooner, if it had seemed good to him so to do, that he might deliver the godly from fear and carelessness.[2] But he setteth out his benefits more thereby, in that he tieth the jaws of the greedy wolf, even when he was ready to enter the sheepfold. Also we know that men's stubbornness increaseth more and more by going forward. Wherefore the conversion of Paul was so much the harder, forasmuch as he was already made more obstinate by continuing his fury.

Shined about him. Because it was no easy matter to pull down[3] so great pride, to break such a lofty courage, to pacify such a blind heat of wicked zeal, and, finally, to bridle a most unbridled beast, Christ must needs have showed some sign of his majesty, whereby Paul might perceive that he had to do with God himself, and not with any mortal man; although there were some respect had of humbling him, (because he was unworthy to have Christ,) to accustom him by and by to obey, by laying upon his

[1] "Opportune," opportunely.
[2] "Anxietate," anxiety.
[3] "Domare," to tame.

neck the meek and sweet yoke of his Spirit. And he was scarce capable of so great gentleness, until his cruelty might be broken.[1] Man's sense cannot comprehend the Divine glory of Christ as it is; but as God did oftentimes put upon him forms wherein he did show himself, so Christ did now declare and make manifest his divinity to Paul, and showed some token of his presence, that he might thereby terrify Paul. For although the godly be afraid and tremble at the seeing of God, yet it must needs be that Paul was far more afraid when as he perceived that the divine power of Christ was set full against him.

4. And therefore Luke saith that he *fell to the ground.* For what other thing can befal man, but that he must lie prostrate, and be, as it were, brought to nothing, when he is overwhelmed with the present feeling of God's glory? And this was the first beginning of the bringing down of Paul, that he might become apt to hear the voice of Christ, which he had despised so long as he sat haughtily upon his horse.

Saul, Saul! Luke compared the light which shined round about Paul to lightning, though I do not doubt but that lightnings did fly in the air. And this voice, which Christ did send out to beat down his pride, may full well be called a *lightning* or *thunderbolt,* because it did not only strike him, and make him astonished, but did quite kill him, so that he was now as nobody with himself, who did so much please himself before, and did challenge to himself authority to put the gospel to flight. Luke putteth down his name in Hebrew in this place, *Saul, Saul!* because he repeateth the words of Christ, who spake unto him, undoubtedly, according to the common custom of the country.

5. *Who art thou, Lord?* We have Paul now somewhat tamed, but he is not yet Christ's disciple. Pride is correct-

[1] "Violenter fracta," forcibly broken.

commanded that which Luke attributeth in this place to the Jews.

25. *The disciples having taken him by night.* There is a question moved here, whether it were lawful for the disciples to save Paul thus or no? and also, whether it were lawful for Paul to escape danger by this means or no? For the laws say that the walls of cities are holy, [sacred,] and that the gates are holy. Therefore, he ought rather to have suffered death, than to have suffered a public order to be broken for his sake. I answer, that we must consider why it is decreed by the laws that the walls should not be violated; to wit, that the cities may not be laid open to murders and robberies, and that the cities may be free[1] from treason. That reason ceaseth when the question is concerning the delivery of an innocent man. Therefore, it was no less lawful for the faithful to be let down in a basket, than it shall be lawful for any private person to leap over a wall, that he may avoid[2] the sudden invasion of the enemy. Cicero doth handle this latter member, and he setteth down very well, that although the law forbid a stranger to come near the wall, yet doth not he offend who shall go up upon the wall to save the city, because the laws must always be inclined[3] to equity. Therefore Paul is not to be blamed, because he escaped by stealth, seeing that he doth that without raising any tumult amongst the people. Nevertheless, we see how the Lord useth to humble those that be his, seeing that Paul is enforced to steal his life from the watchmen of the city if he will save himself. Therefore, he reckoneth this example amongst his infirmities. He was acquainted betime with the cross[4] with this first exercise.

26. *And when Saul was at Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.*

[1] "Tuti," safe. [2] "Propulset," repel. [3] "Flectandæ," bent.
[4] "Hoc tirocinio ad crucem ferendam mature assuefactus fuit." He was early trained to bear the cross by this first [illegible]

that we may hope that he will revenge our miseries, who crieth out of heaven that all that which we suffer is common to him as well as to us. Lastly, we gather hereby what horrible judgment is prepared for the persecutors of the Church, who like giants besiege the very heaven, and shake their darts, which shall pierce[1] their own head by and by; yea, by troubling the heavens, they provoke the thunderbolt of God's wrath against themselves. Also, we are all taught generally, that no man run against Christ by hurting his brother unjustly, and specially, that no man resist the truth rashly and with a blind madness, under colour of zeal.

It is hard for thee. This is a proverbial sentence, taken from oxen or horses, which, when they are pricked with goads, do themselves no good by kicking, save only that they double the evil by causing the prick to go farther into their skins. Christ applieth this similitude unto himself very fitly, because men shall bring upon themselves a double evil, by striving against him, who must of necessity be subject to his will and pleasure, will they nill they. Those which submit themselves willingly to Christ are so far from feeling any pricking at his hands, that they have in him a ready remedy for all wounds; but all the wicked, who endeavour to cast out their poisoned stings against him, shall at length perceive that they are asses and oxen, subject to the prick. So that he is unto the godly a foundation whereon they rest, but unto the reprobate who stumble at him, a stone which with his [its] hardness grindeth them to powder. And although we speak here of the enemies of the gospel, yet this admonition may reach farther, to wit, that we do not think that we shall get any thing by biting the bridle so often as we have any thing to do with God, but that being like to gentle horses, we suffer ourselves meekly to be turned about and guided by his hand. And if he spur us at any time, let us be made more ready to obey by his pricks, lest that befal us which is said in the Psalm, That the jaws of untamed horses and mules are tied and kept in with a hard bit, lest they leap upon us, &c.

[1] "Reditura," recoil upon.

In this history we have a universal figure of that grace which the Lord showeth forth daily in calling us all. All men do not set themselves so violently against the gospel; yet, nevertheless, both pride and also rebellion against God are naturally engendered in all men. We are all wicked and cruel naturally; therefore, in that we are turned to God, that cometh to pass by the wonderful and secret power of God, contrary to nature. The Papists also ascribe the praise of our turning unto God to the grace of God; yet only in part, because they imagine that we work together. But when as the Lord doth mortify our flesh, he subdueth us and bringeth us under, as he did Paul. Neither is our will one hair readier to obey than was Paul's, until such time as the pride of our heart be beaten down, and he have made us not only flexible but also willing to obey and follow. Therefore, such is the beginning of our conversion, that the Lord seeketh us of his own accord, when we wander and go astray, though he be not called and sought; that he changeth the stubborn affections of our heart, to the end he may have us to be apt to be taught.

Furthermore, this history is of great importance to confirm Paul's doctrine. If Paul had always been one of Christ's disciples, wicked and froward men might extenuate the weight of the testimony which he giveth of his Master. If he should have showed himself to be easy to be entreated, and gentle at the first, we should see nothing but that which is proper to man. But when as a deadly enemy to Christ, rebellious against the gospel, puffed up with the confidence which he reposed in his wisdom, inflamed with hatred of the true faith, blinded with hypocrisy, wholly set upon the overthrowing of the truth, [he] is suddenly changed into a new man, after an unwonted manner, and of a wolf is not only turned into a sheep, but doth also take to himself a shepherd's nature, it is as if Christ should bring forth with his hand some angel sent from heaven. For we do not now see that Saul of Tarsus, but a new man framed by the Spirit of God; so that he speaketh by his mouth now, as it were from heaven.

6. *And he trembling and fearing said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, where it shall be told thee what thou must do.*
7. *And the men which accompanied him in his journey stood amazed, hearing indeed a voice, and seeing no man.*
8. *And when Saul was risen from the ground, when his eyes were opened he saw no man; but they led him by the hand, and brought him to Damascus.*
9. *And he was three days without sight, neither eating nor drinking.*

6. The fruit of that reprehension followeth, wherewith we have said it was requisite that Paul should have been sore shaken, that his hardness might be broken. For now he offereth himself as ready to do whatsoever he should command him, whom of late he despised. For when he asketh what Christ would have him do, he granteth him authority and power. Even the very reprobate are also terrified with the threatening of God, so that they are compelled to reverence him, and to submit themselves unto his will and pleasure; yet, nevertheless, they cease not to fret and to foster stubbornness within. But as God humbled Paul, so he wrought effectually in his heart. For it came not to pass by any goodness of nature, that Paul did more willingly submit himself to God than Pharaoh, (Exod. vii. 13;) but because, being like to an anvil, [Pharaoh] did, with his hardness, beat back the whips of God wherewith he was to be brought under, (even as it had been the strokes of a hammer;) but the heart of Paul was suddenly made a fleshy heart of a stony heart, after that it received softness from the Spirit of God; which softness it had not naturally. The same thing do we also try [experience] daily in ourselves. He reproveth us by his word; he threateneth and terrifieth us; he addeth also light correction, and prepareth us divers ways unto subjection. But all these helps shall never cause any man to bring forth good fruit, unless the Spirit of God do mollify his heart within.

And the Lord said unto him. After that Paul had put his stiff neck under the yoke of Christ, he is now governed by his hand. For doubtless the Lord doth not so bring us

into the way, that he leaveth us either before we begin our course, or in the midst thereof; but he bringeth us unto the very mark by little and little. Luke depainteth out unto us in this place this continual course of God's governance. For He taketh him afterward unto himself to be taught whom He hath made apt to be taught. Neither doth that any whit hinder that he useth man's ministry in this point. Because the authority and power remaineth nevertheless in him, howsoever he accomplish his work by man; though it may seem an absurd thing that Christ, who is the Eternal Wisdom of God, doth send a scholar (who was ready to hear, and did gape after instruction) unto another[1] man, that he might learn. But I answer, that that was done not without cause. For the Lord meant by this means to prove Paul's modesty, when he sendeth him to one of his scholars to be taught; as if he himself would not vouchsafe as yet to speak unto him familiarly, but sendeth him to his servants whom he did of late both so proudly contemn and so cruelly persecute.

And we are also taught humility under his person. For if Christ made Paul subject to the teaching of a common disciple, which of us can grudge to hear any teacher, so that he be appointed by Christ, that is, he declare himself to be his minister in deed? Therefore, whereas Paul is sent to Ananias, let us know that that is done to adorn the ministry of the Church. This is assuredly no small honour whereunto it pleaseth God to exalt mankind, when as he chooseth our brethren from amongst us to be interpreters of his will; when as he causeth his holy oracles to sound in the mouth of man, which is naturally given to lying and vanity. But the unthankfulness of the world betrayeth itself again herein, that no man can abide to hear when God speaketh by the mouth of man. All men could desire to have angels come flying unto them, or that heaven should be now and then cut asunder, and that the visible glory of God should come thence. Forasmuch as this preposterous

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curiosity springeth from pride and wicked contempt of the Word, it setteth open a gate to many dotings, and breaketh the bond of mutual consent among the faithful. Therefore the Lord doth testify, that it pleaseth him that we should be taught by men, and confirmeth the order set down by himself. And to this purpose serve these titles, "He which heareth you heareth me," (Luke x. 16;) that he may cause his word to be reverenced as it ought.

It shall be told thee. Christ putteth Ananias in his place by these words, as touching the office of teaching; not because he resigneth his authority to him, but because he shall be a faithful minister, and a sincere preacher of the gospel. Therefore we must always use this moderation, that we hear God alone in Christ, and Christ himself alone, yet as he speaketh by his ministers. And these two vices must be avoided, that the ministers be not proud, under colour of such a precious function, or that their base condition impair no whit of the dignity of heavenly wisdom.

7. *And the men.* He speaketh now briefly of the companions of Paul, that they were witnesses of the vision. Yet it seemeth that this narration doth not in all points agree with that of Paul, which we shall see in the 22d chapter, (Acts xxii. 9.) For he will say there, that his companions were terrified with the light, but they heard no voice. Some there be who think that it was a fault,[1] and that through ignorance of the writer[2] the negation is placed out of its right place. I think that it is no hard matter to answer it; because it may be that they heard the sound of the voice, yet did they not discern either who it was that spake, or what was spoken. "They heard not," saith he, "the voice of him that spake with me." Surely this is the meaning of these words, that he alone knew the speech of Christ. It followeth not thereupon, but that the rest might have heard a dark and doubtful voice. Whereas Luke saith in

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ed in him, and his fury is brought down. But he is not yet so thoroughly healed that he obeyeth Christ; he is only ready to receive commandments, who was before a blasphemer. Therefore, this is the question of a man that is afraid, and thrown down with amazedness. For why doth he not know, by so many signs of God's presence, that it is God that speaketh? Therefore that voice proceeded from a panting and doubtful mind; therefore, Christ driveth him nigher unto repentance. When he addeth, *I am Jesus*, let us remember that that voice sounded from heaven. Therefore it ought to have pierced the mind of Paul when he considered that he had made war against God hitherto. It ought to have brought him by and by to true submission, when he considered that he should not escape scot free, if he should continue rebellious against him whose hand he could not escape.

This place containeth a most profitable doctrine, and the profit thereof is made manifold, for Christ showeth what great account he maketh of his gospel, when he pronounceth that it is his cause, from which he will not be separated. Therefore he can no more refuse to defend the same than he can deny himself. Secondly, the godly may gather great comfort by this, in that they hear that the Son of God is partner with them of the cross, when as they suffer and labour for the testimony of the gospel, and that he doth, as it were, put under his shoulders, that he may bear some part of the burden. For it is not for nothing that he saith that he suffereth in our person; but he will have us to be assuredly persuaded of this, that he suffereth together with us,[1] as if the enemies of the gospel should wound us through his side. Wherefore Paul saith, that that is wanting in the sufferings of Christ what persecutions soever the faithful suffer at this day for the defence of the gospel, (Col. i. 24.) Furthermore, this consolation tendeth not only to that end to comfort us, that it may not be troublesome to us to suffer with our Head, but

[1] "Eadem ipsum sympathia tangi," that he is touched with the same sympathy.

that we may hope that he will revenge our miseries, who crieth out of heaven that all that which we suffer is common to him as well as to us. Lastly, we gather hereby what horrible judgment is prepared for the persecutors of the Church, who like giants besiege the very heaven, and shake their darts, which shall pierce[1] their own head by and by; yea, by troubling the heavens, they provoke the thunderbolt of God's wrath against themselves. Also, we are all taught generally, that no man run against Christ by hurting his brother unjustly, and specially, that no man resist the truth rashly and with a blind madness, under colour of zeal.

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omit that, that they added oil unto the laying on of hands, (Mark vi. 13;) but this, as I have already said, was a point of too great boldness, to prescribe a perpetual law to the Church, that that might be a general sacrament, which was peculiarly used amongst the apostles, (Galat. iii. 7; Romans vi. 6;) that the sign might continue still after that the thing itself was ceased; and with this they joined detestable blasphemy, because they said that sins were only forgiven by baptism, and that the Spirit of regeneration is given by that rotten oil which they presumed to bring in without the Word of God. The Scripture doth testify that we put on Christ in baptism, and that we are ingrafted into his body, that our old man may be crucified, and we renewed into righteousness. These sacrilegious robbers have translated that to adorn the false visor of their sacrament which they have taken from baptism.[1] Neither was this the invention of one man only, but the decree of one council, whereof they babble daily in all their schools.

17. *When they had laid their hands.* The laying on of hands followeth prayers, whereby they testify that the grace of the Spirit is not included in the external ceremony, which they crave humbly at the hands of another. And yet when they confess that God is the author, they neglect not the ceremony which was delivered them by God to this use; and because they usurp it not rashly, the effect is also annexed. This is the profit and efficacy of signs, because God worketh in them, and yet he remaineth the only giver of grace, and distributeth the same according to his good pleasure; but let us remember that the laying on of hands was the instrument of God, at such time as he gave the visible graces of the Spirit to his, and that since the Church was deprived of such riches, it is only a vain visor without any substance.[2]

[1] "Detracta baptismo spolia," the spoils taken from baptism.
[2] "Inane duntaxat esset spectrum," it was only an empty spectre.

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this place that there was a voice heard, and no man seen, his meaning is, that the voice proceeded from no man, but that it was uttered by God. Therefore, to the end the miracle may carry the greater credit, Paul's companions see a light like to lightning; they see Paul lie prostrate; a voice they hear (though not distinctly[1]) sounding from heaven; and yet, nevertheless, Paul alone is taught what he must do.

8. *He was raised up from the earth.* Luke addeth now, that he was taken with so great fear that he could not rise of himself; and not that only, but he was also blind for a time, that he might forget his former wit and wiliness.[2] When as he saith, that *after that his eyes were opened, he saw not*, it seemeth that it doth not agree with the other words which shall follow by and by, that his eyes were covered, as it were, with scales; but the meaning of this place is, that he was blind indeed, and deprived of his sight for that three days; because when he opened his eyes he saw nothing.

9. Whereas he saith, that he neither ate nor drank for the space of three days, that is to be counted a part of the miracle. For although the men of the east country endure hunger better than we, yet we do not read that any did fast three days, save only those who had want of victual, or who were constrained by some greater necessity. Therefore we gather that Paul was wonderfully afraid,[3] seeing that being, as it were, dead, he tasted no meat for three days.

10. *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, called Ananias, unto whom the Lord said in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here am I, Lord.*

11. *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the way that is called Straight, and seek in the house of Judas one called Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.*

[1] "Articulate," articulately.
[2] "Acumen," acumen.
[3] "Expavefactum," terrified.

12. *And he hath seen in a vision a man, named Ananias, entering in, and laying his hand upon him that he might see.*

10. We have said before that this man was rather chosen than any of the apostles, that Paul, having laid away the swelling of his arrogancy, might learn to hear the least, and that he [might] come down from too great loftiness even unto the lowest degree. And this vision was necessary for Ananias, lest through fear he should withdraw himself from that function which was enjoined him, to wit, to teach Paul. For though he know that the Lord calleth him, yet he slideth back, or, at least, he excuseth himself. Therefore it was requisite that he should have some certain testimony of his calling, that there should happy success be promised to his labour, that he might take that in hand with a joyful and valiant mind which the Lord commanded. Furthermore, as Christ animateth and confirmeth Ananias, by appearing to him in the vision, so he prepareth and maketh Paul ready for all things, that he may receive Ananias reverently, as if he would receive an angel coming from heaven. The Lord could have sent Paul straightway unto Ananias, and have showed him his house, but this was more fit for his confirmation; because he knew the better that the Lord had a care of him. And also the Lord setteth out his grace unto us, that as he stopped Paul before, so now he reacheth him his hand of his own accord, by his minister. And, in the mean season, we are also taught, by his example, to be more ready and careful to seek out the lost sheep.

In a vision. This word *vision* signifieth some light[1] which was set before the eyes to testify God's presence. For this is the use of visions, that the majesty of the Word being well proved, it may purchase credit amongst men; which kind of confirmation God used oftentimes toward the prophets; as he saith, that he speaketh to his servants by a vision or by a dream. He hath, indeed, suffered Satan to

[1] "Symbolum," symbol.

deceive the unbelievers with false imaginations and visures.[1] But forasmuch as Satan's juggling casts are of power only in darkness, God doth lighten the minds of his children so, that they assure themselves that they need not to fear legerdemain.[2] Therefore Ananias answereth, *Here am I, Lord*, knowing indeed that it was God.

11. *For, behold, he prayeth.* Luke showeth that Paul gave himself[3] to prayer those three days; and peradventure this was one cause why he fasted, although it be certain, as I have already said, that he suffered such long hunger, because he was after a sort deprived of sense, as men which are in a trance use to be. Christ doth assuredly speak of no short prayer[4] in this place, but he doth rather show that Paul continued in this kind of exercise until he should be more quiet in mind. For besides other causes of terror, that voice might sound in his ears, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And it is not to be doubted but that the careful[5] looking for a perfect revelation did marvellously trouble his mind; but this was the reason why the Lord caused him to wait three days, that he might the more kindle in him an earnest desire to pray.

12. *He saw a man, named Ananias.* It is uncertain whether Luke do yet repeat the words of Christ, or he add this of his own. Those which take it in the person of Luke are moved with some show of absurdity, because it is an unlikely thing that Christ used these words. Although this may be easily answered thus, to wit, that Christ confirmeth Ananias after this sort, There is no cause why thou shouldst fear but that he will receive thee willingly, forasmuch as he already knoweth thy shape by a vision. I have also told him thy name, and whatsoever thou shalt do with him. Yet may the reader choose whether he will.

[1] "Fallacibus spectris," with fallacious spectres. [2] "Impostura," imposture. [3] "Fuisse intentum," was intent. [4] "Precatione momenti," momentary or ejaculatory prayer. [5] "Anxia," anxious.

13. *And Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard of many of this man, what hurt he hath done to thy servants at Jerusalem:*
14. *And here he hath power from the priests to bind all which call upon thy name.*
15. *And the Lord said unto him, Go; because he is a chosen instrument to me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.*
16. *For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name.*

13. *Lord, I have heard.* In that Ananias objecteth the danger to the Lord, he bewrayeth his weakness of faith therein. Therefore we see that the saints and servants of God are afraid of death, which thing keepeth them back from doing their duty; yea, it causeth them sometimes to stagger. Ananias would gladly go to some other place; but this is a point of a good man, that he yieldeth not so much to fear that he withdraweth himself from Christ's obedience. And, therefore, this is a sign of rare obedience,[1] that although through fear of death he were somewhat slack at the first, yet having forgotten himself by and by, he maketh great haste to go whither Christ called him. And yet, notwithstanding, he refuseth not flatly in these words to do that which he is commanded to do, but useth an excuse[2] very modestly, Lord, what meaneth this, that thou sendest me to the hangman? Therefore we may see a desire to obey mixed with fear.

14. *He hath power to bind.* We gather by these words, that the fame of the persecution which Saul went about[3] was spread far and wide; for which cause his conversion was[4] more famous. Nevertheless, the Lord suffered the faithful to be evil entreated,[5] that the benefit of such sudden deliverance might afterwards be the more excellent. We must mark that speech, when he saith that the godly call upon the name of Christ. For whether you understand

[1] "Pietatis," piety.
[2] "Obliqua excusatione," indirect excuse.
[3] "Parabat," was preparing.
[4] "Debuit," must have been.
[5] "Misere cruciari," miserably tortured.

it, that inasmuch as they professed that they were Christ's, they rejoiced therefore in him, or that they used to fly to him for succour, invocation cannot be without sure confidence. By both which the divinity of Christ is not only proved, but also, if the second be received, which seemeth to be more natural,[1] we are taught by the example of the faithful, to call upon the name of Christ when he is preached to us.

15. *Go; because he is an elect instrument.* The commandment repeated the second time, and also the promise of success added, taketh away all doubtfulness. Therefore sloth shall want an excuse, if it be never redressed after that many pricks be used; like as we see that very many, who howsoever the Lord cry unto them continually, do not only loiter during their whole life, but do also cherish their slothfulness by all means possible.[2] If any man object that the Lord speaketh not at this day in a vision, I answer, that forasmuch as the Scripture is abundantly confirmed to us, we must hear God thence.[3]

A vessel of election, or, as Erasmus translateth it, *an elect instrument*, is taken for an excellent minister. The word *instrument* doth show that men can do nothing, save inasmuch as God useth their industry at his pleasure. For if we be instruments, he alone is the author; the force and power to do is in his power alone. And that which Christ speaketh in this place of Paul appertaineth to all men, both one and other. Therefore, how stoutly soever every man labour, and how carefully soever he behave himself in his duty, yet there is no cause why he should challenge to himself any part of praise. Those which dispute subtilely about the word *vessel*, dote through ignorance of the Hebrew tongue. Luke putteth the genitive case for the dative, and that according to the common custom of the Hebrew tongue.

[1] "Genuinum," genuine. [2] "Quibus possunt blanditiis," by all sorts of blandishment. [3] "Quo magis notandum est Ananiæ exemplum, qui ad secundum mandatum moras omnes abrumpit." Wherefore it is the more necessary to give heed to the example of Ananias, who, on the second command, breaks off all delay, omitted.

And he meant to express a certain excellency, as if he should have said, that this man shall be no common minister of Christ, but shall be indued with singular excellency above others. Nevertheless, we must note that if any thing be excellent, it dependeth upon the favour of God, as Paul himself teacheth elsewhere. Who is he that separateth thee? to wit, that thou shouldst excel others, (1 Cor. iv. 7.) To conclude, Christ pronounceth that Paul was chosen unto great and excellent things.

To bear my name amongst the Gentiles. To him who went about before to suppress the name of Christ is the same now committed to be borne. If we please to take שֵׁנֹם (*schenos*) for a *vessel*, this should be a continual metaphor, because a minister of the gospel serveth instead of a vessel to publish the name of Christ; but because it signifieth rather amongst the Hebrews any instrument generally, I take these words, *to carry my name*, for to extol the same unto due honour. For Christ is placed after a sort in his princely throne, when as the world is brought under his power by the preaching of the gospel.

16. *And because.* Paul could not do this, and have Satan quiet, and the world to yield to him willingly; therefore Luke addeth, that he shall be also taught to bear the cross. For the meaning of the words is, I will accustom him to suffer troubles, to endure reproaches, and to abide all manner [of] conflicts, that nothing may terrify him, and keep him back from doing his duty. And when Christ maketh himself Paul's teacher in this matter, he teacheth that the more every man hath profited in his school, the more able is he to bear the cross. For we strive against it, and refuse it as a thing most contrary, until he make our minds more gentle. Also this place teacheth, that no man is fit to preach the gospel, seeing the world is set against it, save only he which is armed to suffer. Therefore, if we will show ourselves faithful ministers of Christ, we must not only crave at his hands the spirit of knowledge and wisdom, but also of con-

stancy and strength, that we may never be discouraged by labouring and toiling; which is the estate of the godly.

17. *And Ananias went and entered into the house, and when he had laid his hands upon him, he said, Brother Saul, the Lord hath sent me, namely Jesus, who appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, that thou mayest recover thy sight, and that thou mayest be filled with the Holy Ghost.*
18. *And forthwith there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he recovered his sight by and by; and arising he was baptized.*
19. *And when he had taken meat he was strengthened.*

17. *Having laid his hands upon.* We have said elsewhere that this was a solemn, and, as it were, an ordinary thing amongst the Jews, to lay their hands upon those whom they did commend to God. The apostles translated that custom taken from sacrifices to their use, either when they gave the visible graces of the Spirit, or when they made any man minister of the Church. To this end doth Ananias lay his hands now upon Paul, partly that he may consecrate him unto God, partly that he may obtain for him the gifts of the Spirit. And though there be no mention made of doctrine in this place, yet it shall appear afterwards by Paul's narration, that Ananias was also commanded to teach him; and by baptism, which was later in order, we gather that he was instructed in the faith. Let the readers note out of the chapter next going before how this ceremony is effectual to give the Spirit. But seeing Paul received the Spirit by the hand of Ananias, the Papists are more than ridiculous, who will have the bishops alone to lay on their hands.

18. *There fell from his eyes as it had been scales.* The blindness of Paul, as we have said before, did not proceed from fear alone, or from amazedness; but by this means was he admonished of his former blindness, that he might quite abandon that boldness and vain confidence wherewith he was puffed up. He boasted that he was taught at the

feet of Gamaliel, (Acts xxii. 3;) and undoubtedly he thought very well of his great wittiness,[1] which was notwithstanding mere blindness. Therefore he is deprived of the sight of his body[2] three days, that he may begin to see with his mind; for those must become fools, whosoever they be, which seem to themselves wise, that they may attain to true wisdom. For seeing that Christ is the Sun of righteousness, in seeing without him we see not; it is he also which openeth the eyes of the mind. Both things were showed to Paul, and to us are they showed in his person; for he hath his eyes covered with scales, that, condemning all his knowledge of ignorance,[3] he may learn that he hath need of new light, which he hath hitherto wanted; and he is taught that he must fet [seek] the true light from none other save only from Christ, and that it is given by no other means save only through his goodness. Furthermore, whereas being pined with three days hunger, he maketh no haste to receive meat until he be baptized, thereby appeareth the earnest[4] desire he had to learn, because he refreshed not his body with meat until his soul had received strength.

And Saul was with the disciples which were at Damascus certain days.

20. *And by and by he preached Christ, that he was the Son of God.*

21. *And they were all amazed which heard, and said, Is not this he which at Jerusalem made havock of those who called upon his name, and he* [had come] *came hither to that end, that he might carry them bound unto the priests?*

22. *And Saul waxed more strong, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this was Christ.*

23. *And when many days were past, the Jews took counsel together to put him to death:*

24. *And their laying in wait was known to Saul. And they kept the gates day and night, that they might slay him:*

[1] "Quin sibi multum placuerit in sua perspicacia," but he was much pleased with his own perspicacity. [2] "Oculis," of his eyes, his bodily sight. [3] "Ut totum suum acumen ignorantiæ damnans," that confessing all his acuteness to be but ignorance. [4] "Ferventissimum," most fervent.

25. And the disciples having taken him by night, put him down through [by] *a wall, and let him down in a basket.*

20. Luke declareth now how fruitful Paul's conversion was, to wit, that he came abroad by and by,[1] and did not only profess that he was a disciple of Christ, but did also set himself against[2] the fury and hatred of the enemies, by defending the gospel stoutly. Therefore, he who of late ran headlong against Christ with furious force, doth now not only submit himself meekly unto his will and pleasure, but like a stout standard-bearer fighteth even unto the utmost danger to maintain his glory. Certain it is that he was not so quickly framed by Ananias' industry,[3] but that so soon as he had learned the first principles by man's mouth, he was extolled by God unto higher things afterward. He comprehendeth the sum of his preaching briefly, when he saith that Christ was the Son of God. In the same sense, he saith shortly after that he saw Christ. And understand thus much, that when Paul intreated out of the law and the prophets of the true office of the Messiah, he taught also that all whatsoever was promised of, and was to be hoped for, at the hands of the Messiah, was revealed and given in Christ. For the words signify thus much, when he saith that he preached that Christ is the Son of God. That was undoubtedly a principle amongst the Jews, that there should a Redeemer come from God, who should restore all things to a happy estate. Paul teacheth that Jesus of Nazareth is he, which he cannot do, unless he shake off those gross errors which he had conceived of the earthly kingdom of the Messiah. Certain it is that Paul declared how Christ was promised in the law, and to what end; but because all tended to this end, that he might prove that the son of Mary was he of whom the law and the prophets bare witness, therefore Luke is content with this one word only.

[1] "Statim prodient in publicum," immediately appeared in public.
[2] "Se . . . objecerit," exposed himself to. [3] "Opera Ananiæ formatum," formed or trained by the agency of Ananias.

21. *They were all amazed.* This is added, that we may know that the power of God was acknowledged. For seeing that the zeal of Paul against the gospel was openly known, they saw no other cause of such a sudden change but the hand of God. And, therefore, this is also one fruit of the miracle, that they all wonder at him being made a new man so suddenly, so that his doctrine doth the more move their minds. Whereas they say that he raged horribly with great cruelty, and that he came of late to Damascus that he might proceed in his purpose, these circumstances serve to augment the miracle. We must also note the phrase, *those which call on his name*, which witnesseth that the godly did so profess the name of Christ, that they placed all their hope of salvation in him. According to that, these "men put their trust in chariots, and others in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord," (Psalm xx. 7.) Finally, whatsoever the Scripture commandeth concerning calling upon the name of God, it agreeth to the person of Christ.

22. *And Saul waxed stronger.* Luke doth not only in this place commend the bold zeal of Paul in confessing the faith of Christ, but also he telleth us that he had strong reasons to convince the Jews. *He waxed strong*, saith he, that is, he got the victory in disputation; his confession did carry with it great force and efficacy,[1] because being furnished with testimonies of Scripture, and such other helps of the Holy Ghost, he did, as it were, tread all his adversaries under his feet.[2] For the word *confounded*, which Luke useth, doth signify, that, forasmuch as Paul did urge them out of measure, they were so stricken that they could not tell where they were.[3] The manner of the confounding is expressed, because Paul proved that Jesus was Christ. For the sense is this, that even when the Jews were most desirous to resist, they were overcome and confounded. So

[1] "Vim et energiam conjunctam," combined force and energy.

[2] "Quasi obruebat," as it were threwn down, overwhelmed.

[3] "Ut apud se non essent," that they were out of themselves.

that Paul tried [found] by experience, that that was most true which he himself affirmeth, that the Scripture is profitable to convince, (2 Tim. iii. 16.) Also, he performed that which he required elsewhere of a bishop and teacher, (Titus i. 7;) for he was armed with the word of God to maintain the truth. And Luke setteth down two things, that Paul so got the victory in disputing that he overthrew the Jews; and yet their stubbornness was not broken and tamed that they yielded to the truth, because their consciences rage nevertheless inwardly, and being thrown down from their false opinion, they do not submit themselves to Christ.

Whence had Paul this victory, save only because the Scripture was his sword? Therefore, so often as heretics stand up to resist the true faith, so often as wicked men endeavour to overthrow all godliness, so often as the ungodly do obstinately resist, let us remember that we must fet [seek] armour hence. Because the Papists find no weapons in Scripture, yea, because they see that it maketh quite against them, they fly into this miserable fortress,[1] that they must not dispute with heretics, and that there can no certain thing be set down out of Scripture. But if Satan himself be vanquished with the sword of the word, why shall it not be able to put heretics to flight? not that they will submit themselves, or make an end of murmuring,[2] but because they shall lie overcome in themselves.[3] And if so be it we covet to escape this trouble, let us raise no tumults against God, but let us, with a quiet and meek spirit, receive that peace which the Scripture offereth us.

23. *When many days were fulfilled.* He saith that many days were expired, that we may know that Paul had some space of time granted him wherein he might do good. For although the Jews did resist him even from the first day, yet the Lord did not suffer the course which he had begun well to be broken off so soon, so he doth with his wonderful

[1] "Asylum," asylum. [2] "Obstrependi," brawling, gainsaying.
[3] "In seipsis convicti," self-convicted.

counsel hinder the purposes of the enemies, stay their endeavours, restrain their malice and madness, whilst that he furthereth[1] the gospel; and also we see what the hatred of the truth doth. For when the wicked see that they are unable to resist, they are carried headlong into bloody fury. They would gladly contemn the word of God if they could; but because they are enforced, whether they will or no, to feel the force thereof, they run headlong, like furious beasts, with blind violence.[2] The unadvised and rash heat of zeal will always almost break out into such cruelty, unless men suffer themselves to be ruled by the word of God. This is, assuredly, horrible blindness. For why are they so mad, save only because their wounded conscience doth vex them? But God doth by this means punish their hypocrisy, who do, therefore, hate sound religion; because, being friends of darkness, they fly the light.

Furthermore, we see how sweetly these preposterous zealous fellows[3] grant themselves liberty to do whatsoever them lusteth, when Satan hath once pricked them forward to persecute the truth. For they fear not to take counsel, under colour of zeal, to put a man to death, which they know is mere wickedness,[4] as at this day the Papists think that they may do whatsoever they will, so they can quench the doctrine of the gospel. They rage not only with sword, but they go about by lying in wait, by treachery, and by most execrable means, to destroy us. We must, first, beware that that do not befal us, that we entangle not ourselves in the defence of evil causes; secondly, that we handle those causes well which we know are good. But it is to be thought that they laid wait for Paul privily; that done, when they could do no good this way, it is likely that they came to the governor of the city, and that then the gates were watched, that they might by one means or other catch him. For Paul saith that Aretas, the king's governor,

[1] "Donec promoveat," until he may further.

[2] "Cæco et præcipite impetu," with blind and headlong impulse.

[3] "Zelotæ," zealots.

[4] "Nefarium," nefarious.

commanded that which Luke attributeth in this place to the Jews.

25. *The disciples having taken him by night.* There is a question moved here, whether it were lawful for the disciples to save Paul thus or no? and also, whether it were lawful for Paul to escape danger by this means or no? For the laws say that the walls of cities are holy, [sacred,] and that the gates are holy. Therefore, he ought rather to have suffered death, than to have suffered a public order to be broken for his sake. I answer, that we must consider why it is decreed by the laws that the walls should not be violated; to wit, that the cities may not be laid open to murders and robberies, and that the cities may be free[1] from treason. That reason ceaseth when the question is concerning the delivery of an innocent man. Therefore, it was no less lawful for the faithful to be let down in a basket, than it shall be lawful for any private person to leap over a wall, that he may avoid[2] the sudden invasion of the enemy. Cicero doth handle this latter member, and he setteth down very well, that although the law forbid a stranger to come near the wall, yet doth not he offend who shall go up upon the wall to save the city, because the laws must always be inclined[3] to equity. Therefore Paul is not to be blamed, because he escaped by stealth, seeing that he doth that without raising any tumult amongst the people. Nevertheless, we see how the Lord useth to humble those that be his, seeing that Paul is enforced to steal his life from the watchmen of the city if he will save himself. Therefore, he reckoneth this example amongst his infirmities. He was acquainted betime with the cross[4] with this first exercise.

26. *And when Saul was at Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.*

[1] "Tuti," safe. [2] "Propulset," repel. [3] "Flectandæ," bent.
[4] "Hoc tirocinio ad crucem ferendam mature assuefactus fuit." He was early trained to bear the cross by this first trial.

27. *But when Barnabas had taken him, he brought him to the apostles, and he told them how that he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had behaved himself boldly at Damascus, in the name of Jesus.*

28. *And he was conversant with them at Jerusalem ; and when he was emboldened in the name of the Lord Jesus,*

29. *He spake, and disputed with the Grecians. And they went about to kill him.*

30. *Which when the brethren knew, they brought him to Cesarea, and sent him to Tarsus.*

31. *Then the churches throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace ; and they were edified, and walked in the fear of the Lord, and were filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.*

26. *When Saul was.* These were yet hard entrances[1] for Paul, who was as yet but a fresh-water soldier, in that, when he had hardly escaped the hands of the enemies, the disciples would not receive him. For he might have seemed to have been so tossed to and fro, as it were, in mockery, that he could have no resting-place. All his own nation was set against him for Christ's cause. The Christians refuse him. Might he not have been quite discouraged and out of hope, as one expelled out of men's company? First, what remaineth but that he fall away from the Church, seeing he is not received? But when he remembereth the life which he had led aforetime, he marvelleth not that they are afraid[2] of him. Therefore, he doth patiently suffer the brethren to refuse his company, seeing they had just cause of fear. This was true conversion, that whereas he raged horribly before, he doth now valiantly suffer the storms of persecutions; and, in the mean season, when as he cannot be admitted into the company of the godly, he waiteth with a quiet mind until God reconcile them unto him. We must

[1] "Dura et aspera Paulo adhuc tironi rudimenta hæc fuerunt," this was rough and harsh training for Paul, who was as yet a tyro. [2] "Se horrori esse," that he is a terror to them.

diligently note what he desireth, to wit, that he may be numbered amongst the disciples of Christ. This can he not obtain. Here is no ambition, but he was to be instructed by this means to make more account even of the lowest place amongst the disciples of Christ than of all masterships in corrupt and revolted[1] synagogues. And from this submission was he exalted unto the highest degree of honour, that he might be the principal doctor of the Church, even unto the end of the world. But no man is fit to be a teacher in the Church save only he who willingly submitteth himself,[2] that he may be a fellow disciple with other men.

27. *When Barnabas had taken him.* Whereas the disciples fled so fast from Paul, that was, peradventure, a point of too great fearfulness,[3] and yet he speaketh of none of the common sort, but of the apostles themselves. But he doth either extenuate or lighten their fault, because they suspected him for just causes, whom they had found and tried[4] to be such a deadly enemy; and, it was to be feared, lest they should rashly endanger themselves if they should have showed themselves to be so easy to entreat. Therefore, I think that they are not to be blamed for that fear which they conceived for just cause, or that they deserve to be even accused for the same. For if they had been called to give an account of their faith, they would have provoked[5] not Paul only, but also all the furies of hell, without fear. Whence we gather that every fear is not to be condemned but such as causeth us to turn aside from our duty. The narration which Luke addeth may be referred as well unto the person of Barnabas as of Paul. Yet I think rather that Paul declareth to the apostles what had befallen him; and yet the speech may be well applied to Barnabas, especially when as mention is made of Paul's boldness.

[1] "Apostaticis," apostate. [2] "Qui sponte in ordinem se cogit," who spontaneously reduces himself into subordination. [3] "Id nimiæ forsan timiditatis fuit," that, perhaps, was owing to too great timidity. [4] "Experti sunt," experienced. [5] "Provocassent," challenged or defied.

28. Luke saith afterwards that Paul *went in and out with the disciples*, which speech signifieth amongst the Hebrews familiarity, as the inhabitants of cities are said to go in and out at the gates of the city. Therefore, after that Paul was commended by the testimony of Barnabas, he began to be counted one of the flock, that he might be thoroughly known to the Church. Luke saith again that he dealt *boldly* in the name of the Lord, by which words he commendeth his (stoutness and) courage in professing the gospel For he durst never have whispered amidst so many lets, unless he had been endowed with rare constancy. Nevertheless, all men are taught what they ought to do; to wit, every man according to the measure of his faith. For though all be not Pauls, yet the faith of Christ ought to engender in our minds so great boldness, that we be not altogether dumb when we have need to speak. I take *the name of the Lord* in this place for the profession of the gospel; in this sense, that Paul defended Christ's cause manfully.

29. *He disputed with the Grecians.* Erasmus noteth well in this place that those are here called Grecians, not which came[1] of Grecians, but rather those Jews who were scattered throughout divers parts of the world. Those men were wont to come together[2] to Jerusalem to worship. And it is to be thought that Paul disputed rather with strangers and aliens,[3] than with those who dwelt at Jerusalem,[4] because this latter sort would never have abidden him, neither had it been wisely done to come in their sight. Therefore, being excluded from those who knew him before, he tried whether there were any hope to do good amongst men whom he knew not, so that he did most stoutly whatsoever concerned the duty of a valiant soldier.

They would have slain him. Behold, again, fury instead

[1] "Qui oriundi essent ex Græcis," who were of Greek extraction.
[2] "Ex suis provinciis," from their different provinces. [3] "Advenis .. hospitibus," with guests and strangers. [4] "Indigenis," with natives.

of zeal; and it cannot otherwise be, but that hypocrisy and superstition will be cruel and fierce. The godly must be incensed with an holy wrath, when they see the pure truth of God corrupted with false and wicked opinions; yet, so that they moderate their zeal, that they set down nothing until they have thoroughly weighed the cause; and, secondly, that they essay to bring those into the way who wander out of the same. Lastly, that if they see their stubbornness to be past hope, they themselves take not the sword in hand, because they must know that they have no authority granted them of the Lord to (punish or) revenge. But hypocrites are always ready to shed blood before they know the matter; so that superstition is bloody, through blind and headlong fury. But Paul, who of late ran up and down to vex the godly, can abide nowhere now.[1] And yet this estate was far better for him, than if he should have reigned in peace and quietness, driving the godly everywhere out of their places.

30. In that he went to Tarsus, he did it undoubtedly to this end, that he might carry the doctrine of the gospel thither, because he hoped that he should have some favour and authority in his country, where he was famous; yet was he brought thither by the brethren, that they might deliver him from the lying in wait.

31. *Then the Churches.* Luke's meaning is, that the enemies of the gospel were greatly provoked by Paul's presence. For why was there such peace made suddenly by his departure, save only because the very sight of him did provoke the fury of the enemies? And yet this is no reproach to him, as if he had been, as it were, some trumpet in war; but Luke doth rather commend him for this, because he made the wicked run mad, only with the smell of him when he was near them. For Christ meant so to triumph in him, that he might be no less a trouble than an ornament to his

[1] "Fidem figere," rest his foot.

Church. Therefore we are taught by this example that those are not by and by[1] to be condemned, who inflame the madness of the wicked more than others; which admonition is not a little profitable. For as we are too dainty and too much besotted with the love of our own rest, so we be also sometimes angry with the best and most excellent servants of Christ, if we think that through their vehemency the wicked are pricked forward to do hurt; and by this means we do injury to the Spirit of God, whose force and speech kindleth all that flame.

And whereas Luke saith, that the Churches had peace, let us know that it was not continual, but because the Lord granted his servants some short breathing. For thus doth he bear with[2] our infirmity, when he appeaseth or mitigateth the winds and storms of persecutions, lest, if they should hold on still, they should urge us out of measure. And this blessing is not to be despised, neither is it any common blessing, when as the Churches have peace. But Luke addeth other things, which are of far more value; to wit, that the Churches were edified, they walked in the fear of God, and they were filled with the consolation of the Spirit. For as we are wont to riot and exceed in time of peace, the Churches are more happy, for the most part, amidst the tumults of war, than if they should enjoy what rest they would desire. But and if holy conversation, and the consolation of the Spirit, whereby their state doth flourish, be taken away, they lose not only their felicity, but they come to nought. Therefore, let us learn not to abuse external peace in banqueting and idleness; but the more rest we have given us from our enemies, to encourage ourselves to go forward in godliness whilst we may. And if at any time the Lord let loose the bridle to the wicked to trouble us, let the inward consolation of the Spirit be sufficient for us. Finally, as well in peace as in war, let us always joyfully go forward toward him who hath a reward for us.[3]

[1] "Protinus," forthwith. [2] "Indulget," is indulgent to.
[3] "Ad nostrum agonotheten," to him who judges our combat.

Edification may be taken either for increase; to wit, whilst the Churches are augmented with the number of the faithful, or for their going forward who are already in the flock; to wit, whilst they have new gifts given them, and have greater confirmation of godliness. In the first signification it shall be referred unto the persons; in the second unto the gifts of the Spirit. I embrace both willingly; that there were some every now and then gathered unto the Church who were strangers before, and those who were of the household of the Church did increase in godliness and other virtues. Furthermore, the metaphor of a building is very convenient, because the Church is the temple and house of God, and every one of the faithful is also a temple, (1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 16.) The two things which follow, that they walked in the fear of God, and that they were filled with the consolation of the Spirit, are parts of that edification. Therefore, though the Churches had peace, yet they were not drunken with delights and earthly joy, but, trusting to God's help, they were more emboldened to glorify God.

32. *And it happened, that whilst Peter walked through all, he came also unto the saints which dwelt at Lydda.*
33. *And he found there a man named Æneas, who had laid in his bed eight years, who had the palsy.*
34. *And Peter saith unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ make thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And forthwith he arose.*
35. *And all those which dwelt at Lydda and Assaron saw him, and were turned unto the Lord.*

32. Luke setteth down how the Church was increased by miracles. And he reciteth two miracles: That a man who had been bedrid eight years, having the palsy, was suddenly healed; and that a certain woman was raised from death. First, he saith, that as Peter walked throughout all, he came to Lydda. And by *all*, understand not Churches, but the faithful, because it is in Greek of the masculine gender, though that skilleth not much for the sense. And it was meet that the apostles, who had no certain place of abode, should wander hither and thither as occasion was offered.

Wherefore, whilst they are all occupied in divers parts, Peter took upon him this charge, whereby the foolishness of the Papists is refuted, who gather Peter's primacy by the authority which he had to visit; as if the rest of the apostles did live idly at Jerusalem like private men, when Peter did visit the Churches. Again, admit we grant that Peter was the chief apostle, which thing the Scripture showeth oftentimes, doth it thereupon follow that he was the head of the world? But would to God the bishop of Rome, who will be counted Peter's successor, would travel as he did to animate the brethren, and would every where prove indeed that he is the apostle of Christ. Now, he which out of his throne doth with more than tyrannous lordship oppress all the Churches, pretendeth that Peter did visit the Churches with great pains.

Which dwelt at Lydda. Lydda, which was afterward called Diospolis, was situated not far from the Mediterranean Sea, being a renowned city as well for antiquity as also for many gifts. Joppa was nigh to this city, which had a famous haven, though very full of rocks. The city itself stood upon a high cliff, whence they might see to Jerusalem. At this day there is nothing to be seen there but the ruinous walls of the old city, save only that the haven remaineth, which they call most commonly Japhet. It should seem that Luke nameth Assaron as some town or city. Jerome mentioneth Saron, and thinketh that thereby is meant the whole plain lying between Cesarea and Joppa. But because Jerome showeth no reason why he should change the reading which is commonly used, I admit that willingly which Luke's text showeth me, to wit, that it was a city hard by. But I do not contend about this matter; as I do not ambitiously gather those things which may serve for a vain brag, because it shall be sufficient for the godly readers to know those things which make to Luke's meaning.

34, *Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.* It is certain that the apostles would never have attempted the doing of miracles, unless they had been first certified of the will of God, where-

upon the effect did depend. For they had no such power of the Spirit given them that they could heal whatsoever sick persons they would; but as Christ himself used a measure in his miracles, so he would have his apostles to work no more than he knew were profitable. Therefore Peter did not rashly break out into these words; because he might have set himself to be laughed at, unless he had already known the will of God. It may be that he prayed apart. The Spirit, who was the author of all miracles, and which wrought by the hand of Peter, did even then direct his tongue, and did move his heart by a secret inspiration. And in these words Peter showeth plainly that he is only the minister of the miracle, and that it proceedeth from the power of Christ; that he may by this means extol the name of Christ alone.

Make thy bed. These circumstances do amplify the glory of the miracle, in that he doth not only recover strength to rise, but is also able to make his own bed, who could move no member before. To the same end tendeth the continuance of the disease; for a palsy of eight years' continuance is not easily cured. In like sort is he said to have laid in his bed, that we may know that all his members were lame; for it was a little bed wherein they were wont to rest at noon. Whereas Æneas was so ready to make trial of his members, he thereby declared the obedience of his faith. For although he perceived the strength which was given him,[1] yet he was most of all moved with the efficacy of the words, *to rise.*

35. *And all those.* His meaning is, that the miracle was published abroad, and was known throughout the whole city. For when the Scripture saith *all,* it doth not comprehend every one how many so ever it noteth; but it putteth *all* for the more part, or for many, or for the common sort of men. Therefore, the sense is, that whereas there was but a small number of godly men there, a great part of

[1] "Redditum sibi vigorem," that his vigour was restored.

the people became members of the Church. And in this clause is expressed the fruit of the miracle, because they embraced Christ and his gospel. Wherefore those men corrupt miracles, whosoever they be, which look only upon men, and do not turn their eyes toward this end, that being instructed concerning the power and grace of Christ, they may stick only to him. Therefore that token of Christ's divine power which he showed was the beginning of turning to him.[1]

36. *And there was a certain disciple at Joppa called Tabitha, which, if you interpret it, is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and alms which she did.*
37. *And it happened in those days that she was sick, and died. And when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper parlour.*
38. *And forasmuch as Lydda was near to Joppa, the disciples, who had heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, requesting him that he would come to them.*

36. There followeth a more famous token of Christ's power, by how much it is more hard to restore life to a dead body, than to restore health to a man that is sick. But Luke doth first commend the person of Tabitha on whom the miracle was showed, and that with a double title; to wit, that she was Christ's disciple, and that she approved her faith with good works and alms. He hath oftentimes already put this word *disciple* for a Christian man; and lest we should think that that name was proper to men only, he attributeth the same to a woman. And this title teacheth us that Christianity cannot be without doctrine; and that that form of learning is prescribed, that the same Christ may be Master to all. This is the chiefest praise, this is the beginning of holy life, this is the root of all virtues, to have learned of the Son of God the way to live, and the true life. The fruits of good works proceed afterward from

[1] "Initium et præparatio conversionis ad ipsum," was a preparation and commencement of conversion to him.

faith. By good works I mean the duties of love, wherewith our neighbours are helped; and Luke placeth the chief kind in alms. The commendation of liberality is great, because, as the Holy Ghost doth witness, it containeth in itself the sum of a godly and perfect life. Now we see what titles Tabitha hath. For religion toward God or faith goeth first; secondly, that she exercised herself in helping the brethren, and specially in relieving the poverty of the poor. For by use it is come to pass, that all that help wherewith the poor, and those which are in misery, are helped, is called ελεημοσυνη. Tabitha is rather a Syrian word than an Hebrew, which Luke did turn into Greek, that we might know that it was not like to the virtues of the holy women, and that she was debased in such a simple name;[1] for Dorcas signifieth a goat; but the holiness of her life did easily wipe away the blot of a name not very seemly.

37. *It happened that she was sick.* He saith in plain words that she was sick, that he may the more plainly express her death which followed. To the same end he saith that the corpse was washed and laid in an upper chamber; therefore, these circumstances serve to make the miracle to be believed. Whereas they carry her not straightway to the grave, but lay her in the upper part of the house, that they may keep her there, we may thereby gather that they had some hope of recovering her life. It is likely that the rite of washing, whereof Luke maketh mention, was most ancient; and I do not doubt but that it came from the holy fathers by continual course of times, as if it had been delivered from hand to hand, that in death itself some visible image of the resurrection might comfort the minds of the godly, and lift them up unto some good hope; to wit, seeing the manifestation of eternal life was not so evident, yea, seeing that Christ, the pledge and substance of eternal life, was not as yet revealed,

[1] "Ut sanctæ mulieris virtutibus non fuisse conforme sciremus, et in nomine parum honorifico fuisse quasi dejectam," that we might know that it was not suitable to the virtues of a holy woman, and that she was, as it were, degraded by a name far from honourable.

it was requisite that both the obscurity of doctrine, and also the absence of Christ, should be supplied by such helps. Therefore, they washed the bodies of the dead, that they might once[1] stand before the judgment-seat of God, being clean.[2] Finally, there was the same reason for washing the dead which was for the living; the daily washing put them in mind of this, that no man can please God save he who should be purged from his filthiness. So, in the rite of burying, God would have some sign extant whereby men might be admonished that they went polluted out of this life by reason of that filthiness which they had gathered in the world. Washing did no more help those which were dead than burial, but it was used to teach the living;[3] for because death hath some show of destruction, lest it should extinguish the faith of the resurrection, it was requisite that contrary shows should be set against it, that they might represent life in death. The Gentiles also took to themselves this ceremony, for which cause Ennius saith, *A good woman did wash and anoint Tarquinius's corpse.* But (their) imitation was but apish[4] in this thing, as in all other ceremonies. And Christians also have taken to themselves this example unadvisedly, as if the observation of a figure used under the law ought to continue always; for at the beginning of the gospel, although the necessity were abolished, yet the use was lawful, until such time as it might grow out of use in tract of time. But the monks do at this day no less imitate Judaism than did the Gentiles in times past, without choice and judgment, for they wash corpses, that they may bury Christ in shadows, which, being buried with him in his grave, ought never to have been used any more.

38. *The disciples, which had heard.* The washing of the corpse showeth that the disciples knew not what would come to pass, for by this means they make the corpse ready to be

[1] "Ut pura aliquando ad Dei tribunal sisterentur," that they might one day stand pure at the judgment-seat of God. [2] "Quotidianæ ablutiones," their daily ablutions. [3] "Superstites," survivors. [4] "Præpostera," preposterous.

buried. Yet this is some token of hope, that they lay her in an upper chamber, and send to Peter. Furthermore, they murmur not against God, neither do they cry out that it is an unmeet thing; but they humbly crave God's help, not that they will make Tabitha immortal, but their only desire is to have her life prolonged for a time, that she may yet profit the Church.

39. *And Peter arose and came with them, whom, when he was come, they brought into the upper chamber, and all the widows stood about her weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made when she was with them.*
40. *And when they were all put out, Peter kneeled down and prayed; and, turning himself toward the corpse, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up.*
41. *And he reached out his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, he restored* [exhibited] *her alive.*
42. *That was noised through all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.*
43. *And it happened that he stayed many days at Joppa with a certain man, named Simon, a tanner.*

39. *And Peter arose.* It is doubtful whether the messengers declared to Peter the (matter and) cause why they fet [sent for] him; yet it is more like to be true, that they requested him absolutely that he would come to work a miracle. But there ariseth another question, whether he knew God's purpose or not? First, if he should mistrust the success, he should go with them unadvisedly? I answer, although he did not yet know what the Lord would do, yet can he not be blamed for yielding to the request of the brethren. Also, there were other reasons why he should come; to wit, to mitigate their sorrow; to strengthen them with godly exhortations, lest they should faint, being discouraged with the death of one woman; to establish the Church, which was as yet tender, and but as it were an infant. Lastly, this one thing ought to have been sufficient for him, because in refusing he should have been thought

proudly to despise his brethren, notwithstanding we must know this also, that so often as the Lord determined to work some miracle by his apostles, he did always direct them by the secret motion of the Spirit. I do not doubt but that although Peter were not yet certain of the life of Tabitha, yet did he undoubtedly perceive that God was his guide and conductor in that journey, so that he addressed himself to go not unadvisedly, though being uncertain of the event.[1]

All the widows. Luke expresseth in this place the cause for which Tabitha was raised from death; to wit, because God pitied the poor, and did at their desire restore the woman to life. There were also other ends. For seeing she liveth two lives, those virtues which Luke commended before are adorned in her person, but the chief end is, that the glory of Christ may be set forth. For God could have kept her alive longer; neither doth he change his purpose, as being moved with repentance when he doth restore her to life again, but because many of the disciples were weak and novices, who had need of confirmation, God declareth by the second life of Tabitha, that his Son is author of life. Therefore, God did respect the poor and widows in such sort, that, by relieving their poverty, he established in their minds the faith of his gospel; for in this miracle he gave ample matter of profiting.

40. *When they were all put forth.* When as he taketh a time to pray, he seemeth as yet to doubt what will be the end. When he healed Æneas he brake out into these words, without making any stop, *Æneas, Jesus Christ make thee whole.* But as the operation of the Spirit is not always alike and the same, it may be that though he knew the power of God, yet he went forward unto the miracle by degrees. Yet it seemeth to be an absurd thing, that he putteth all the saints out of the chamber, for whom it had been

[1] "Suspensus licet atque . . incertus," though in suspense and uncertain.

better to have seen it with their eyes. But because the Lord had not as yet revealed the time when, and the manner how, he would show forth his power, he desired to be alone, that he might the more fitly pray. Also it might be, that he knew some other reason which moved him to do this, which we know not. It is recorded in the Sacred History, (1 Kings xvii. 23,) that Elias did the same. For he being alone, and not so much as the mother of the child with him, doth stretch himself thrice upon the dead corpse. For the Spirit of God hath his vehement motions, which, if any man will square out according to the common use of men, or measure by the sense of the flesh, he shall do wickedly and unjustly. We must this think, when as Peter, as it were doubting, seeketh a by place, he preventeth superstition, lest any man should ascribe to his power the work of God, whereof he was only a minister. For he which withdrew himself from company, and did pray so instantly, did plainly confess that the matter was not in his own hand. Therefore, when Peter waiteth to know what pleaseth the Lord, he confesseth that he alone was the author of the work. Kneeling in time of prayer is a token of humility, which hath a double profit, that all our members may be applied unto the worship of God, and that the external exercise of the body may help the weakness of the mind; but we must take heed so often as we kneel down, that the inward submission of the heart be answerable to the ceremony, that it be not vain and false.[1]

Turning towards the corpse. This seemeth also to be contrary to reason, that he speaketh unto a corpse without feeling; but this speaking unto the dead corpse was one point of the vehemency whereunto the Spirit of God enforced Peter. And if any man desire a reason, this form of speech doth more lively express the power of God in raising the dead, than if it should be said in the third person, let this body receive life again and live. Therefore, when as Ezekiel doth shadow the deliverance of the people under a figure of the

[1] "Ne fallax sit ac lusoria," that it be not elusory and fallacious.

resurrection: "O dead bones," (saith he,) "hear the word of the Lord," (Ezek. xxxvii. 4.) And Christ saith, "The time shall come when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," (John v. 25.) For this was indeed the voice of Christ, which was uttered by the mouth of Peter, and gave [back] breath to the body of Tabitha. The circumstances following serve to confirm the certainty of the miracle.

41. Luke repeateth, again, in the end that she was showed openly to the disciples; whence we gather that she was raised again, rather for other men's sake than for her own. Brain-sick fellows,[1] who dream that the soul of man is only a blast which vanisheth away until the day of the resurrection, snatch at this place to prove their doting withal. To what end was it (say they) to call back the soul of Tabitha into the prison of the body, where it should suffer such misery, if it were received into blessed rest? As if it were not lawful for God to have respect of his glory as well in death as in life; and as if this were not the true felicity of the godly to live and die to him, yea, as if Christ were not to us a vantage, as well by living as dying, (Phil. i. 21,) when we dedicate ourselves to him. Therefore, there shall no inconvenience follow, if the Lord had greater respect to his own glory than to Tabitha, although, as the commodity[2] of the faithful is always annexed to the glory of God, this turned to her greater good that she revived, that she might be a more excellent instrument of God's goodness and power.

42. *And many believed.* Now appear manifold fruits of the miracle, for God comforted the poor, a godly matron was restored to the Church, in whose death it suffered great loss, and many are called unto the faith; for although Peter were [had been] a minister of so great power, yet he keepeth not the men in [on] himself, but doth rather direct them unto Christ.

[1] "Fanatici quidam," certain fanatics. [2] "Utilitas," advantage, interest.

43. When as he saith that Peter dwelt with a tanner, we may hereby gather of what manner of men the church of Joppa did consist, for if the chieftains of the city had been converted to Christ, some one of them would have lodged Peter; for it had been too cruel a thing to suffer an apostle of Christ to be so despised. Therefore, the Lord did gather together there, as every where, a church of the common sort of men, that he might throw down the pride of the flesh; and also thereby appeareth Peter's courtesy, in that he vouchsafeth to lodge with a man of that calling; although it seemeth that he was rather a merchant of some good estimation, than one of the basest sort of workmen. For Luke will say afterwards that there were there some which ministered unto Peter, whereby it appeareth that he was well and honestly used.

CHAPTER X.

1. *And there was a certain man of Cesarea named Cornelius, a captain* [centurion] *of the band which was called the Italian band;*
2. *A devout man, and one that feared God with his household, and one which gave alms to all the people, and which prayed to God continually.*
3. *He saw plainly in a vision, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, Cornelius.*
4. *And beholding, and being afraid, he said, What is it, Lord? Then he said to him, Thy prayers and thy alms are come up into remembrance before God.*
5. *And now send men to Joppa, and fet* [send for] *Simon, which is called Peter:*
6. *He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house lieth to the sea; he shall tell thee what thou must do.*

1. Luke passeth over now unto a worthy[1] history, to wit, that God vouchsafeth to advance a stranger, and one uncircumcised, unto singular honour above all the Jews, because he doth both send his angel unto him, and for his sake bringeth Peter to Cesarea, that he may instruct him in the gospel. But first of all Luke showeth what manner of person this Cornelius was, for whose cause an angel descended from heaven, and God spake to Peter in a vision. He was a captain [centurion] of the Italian band; a band [cohort] did consist upon [of] a thousand footmen, and he which was chief captain was called a tribune, (or marshal.) Again, every hundred had a captain. A legion had for the most part five bands. That band was called the Italian band, because the Romans did choose soldiers oftentimes from amongst those which dwelt in the provinces; but they had the strength of the army[2] out of Italy; therefore, Cornelius was an Italian born; but he was at Cesarea with his hundred, to guard the city. For the Romans were wont so to distribute their places of abode,[3] that every city of renown might have a garrison to stay sudden uproars. A rare example that a soldier was so devout towards God, so upright and courteous towards men! For at that time the Italians, when as they were carried into the provinces to live in warfare, ran to and fro like hungry wolves to get some prey; they had for the most part no more religion than beasts; they had as great care of innocency as cut-throats; for which cause the virtues of Cornelius deserve the greater commendation, in that leading a soldier's life, which was at that time most corrupt, he served God holily, and lived amongst men without doing any hurt or injury. And this is no small amplification of his praise, in that casting away superstition wherein he was born and brought up, he embraced the pure worship of God; for we know what account the Italians made of themselves, and how proudly they despised others. And the Jews were at that time in such contempt,

[1] "Memorabilem," memorable. [2] "Robur exercituum," the flower of their armies. [3] "Stationes," stations.

that for their sakes pure religion was counted infamous, and almost execrable. Seeing that none of these things could hinder Cornelius, but that forsaking his idols he did embrace the true worship of the true God alone, it must needs be that he was endued with rare and singular sincerity. Moreover, he could find scarce any thing amongst the Jews wherewith he could be allured unto the study of godliness, because there was then scarce one amongst a thousand which had even some small smattering of the law; and, undoubtedly, Cornelius had lighted upon some good worshipper of God, who being sound from corrupt opinions, did expound unto him the law faithfully, without mixing any leaven therewith; but because Luke giveth him many titles of commendation, we must note them all [singly.]

2. He saith that he was a godly man, and one that feared God; secondly, that like a good householder he had a care to instruct his families; he praiseth him afterward for the offices of love, because he was beneficial [beneficent] toward all the people; and, lastly, that he prayed [to] God continually. The sum is this, that Cornelius was a man of singular virtues, wherein the integrity of the godly consisteth, so that his life was framed, in all points, according to the rule which God prescribeth unto us. And because the law is contained in two tables, Luke commendeth, in the former place, Cornelius' godliness; secondly, he descendeth unto the second part, that he exercised the offices of love toward men. This is very profitable to be marked, because we have a way to live well described in his person.

Wherefore, in ordering the life well, let faith and religion be the foundation, which being taken away, all other virtues are nothing else but smokes. Luke reckoneth up the fear of God and prayer as fruits and testimonies of godliness and of the worship of God, and that for good causes. For religion cannot be separated from the fear of God and the reverence of him, neither can any man be counted godly, save he who, acknowledging God to be his

Father and Lord, doth addict himself wholly to him. And let us know that voluntary fear is commended in this place, when those men submit themselves to God willingly and from their heart, who duly consider themselves what is due to him.

Moreover, because a great part of the world doth, with feigned trifles, corrupt and deprave the worship of God, Luke added, for good causes, that Cornelius prayed continually; whereby he doth signify, that he proved not his godliness only with external ceremonies, but that he worshipped God spiritually, when as he exercised himself in prayer. We must also note the continuance of his prayer; whence we gather, that he did not pray only coldly, after the common custom, but that he was earnestly bent to prayer, as the continual benefits of God do exhort us and prick us forward thereunto, and the force of faith ought there to show itself. Wherefore let every one of us exhort himself to persevere in prayer by the example of Cornelius.

With all his house. We must not lightly pass over this commendation that Cornelius had a church in his house. And, surely, a true worshipper of God will not suffer so much as in him lieth God to be banished from his house. For how unmeet a thing is it for him to maintain his own right stoutly, that his wife, children, servants, and maids may obey him, and not to regard that God is disobeyed. It shall sometimes fall out so that a godly man cannot have even his wife to be of his mind; yet he, which ruleth others, must endeavour by all means to have God obeyed; and there is nothing more meet than that we should consecrate all ours to God as ourselves. Therefore, if a godly man have children which are unlike him, or a wife of evil conditions, or lewd and wicked servants, let him not wink, nor yet suffer his house to be polluted through his slothfulness. The diligence of Cornelius is not so much commended as the blessing of God, whereby it came to pass that he had his house obedient unto him in godliness. And we must not omit the circumstance, that he instructed

his family in the fear of God, setting light by the fear of danger, which did hang over his head therefore. For the Jewish religion was in great contempt;[1] and no citizen of Rome might freely[2] receive any strange religion, as they called it. Wherefore, although the sincere profession of the gospel be evil spoken of in the world, yet is it too corrupt frightfulness[3] if that unjust hatred hinder any man from offering his family to God for a sacrifice, by godly instruction.

Giving alms. There is also the figure *synecdoche* in this member, [clause.] For as it was said, even now, that the worship of God was proved by prayers, so now, when Luke speaketh of love, he maketh choice of one kind; whereby he showeth that Cornelius was a liberal and bountiful man. For our godliness ought so to appear to men, that we declare that we fear God by using bountifulness and justice. The word *alms* is translated unto those external good works wherewith we help the poor, (Isaiah lviii. 7,) forasmuch as *misericordia*, or mercy, is the inward affection of the heart properly. For from this fountain springeth true and well ordered bountifulness, if the troubles and sorrows of our brethren do move us to compassion; if, considering the unity which is amongst us, we foster and cherish them as we would cherish our own flesh, and study to help them as we would help our own members. Hypocrites are, indeed, sometimes liberal, or at least bountiful; but howsoever they waste all,[4] yet no relief which they shall bestow upon the poor shall be worthy to be called by the name of alms. For we must hold that of Paul, He which hath no love is nothing, though he give all his goods to the poor, (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) Let us, therefore, learn by this word, that God doth then allow our liberality, if we relieve the poverty of the poor, being moved with compassion, and if, as it were, with open bowels we bestow that which the liberality of God doth give.

[1] "Valde...exosa," exceedingly hated.
[2] "Impune," with impunity.
[3] "Timiditas," timidity or cowardice.
[4] "Ut omnia profundant," how profuse soever they be.

Whereas Luke saith that he gave alms to *all* the people, it signifieth as much as everywhere to the poor; for there were not a few rich men to whom to have given had been an absurd thing. But whereas he bestowed so liberally upon the Jews, he declared how he agreed with them in religion; in which respect Luke saith, shortly after, that he was allowed of[1] all the Jews. And if so be it he was such an excellent mirror of godliness and holiness, even when he had but a small smattering of faith, although he were letted so many ways,[2] ought not we to be ashamed who will be accounted most Christian doctors, and are yet so cold in the exercises of godliness? If a small sparkle of faith prevailed so much in him, what ought the full brightness of knowledge to work in us? But howsoever we boast of Christ with full mouth, yet how far are we, for the most part, from the example of the holy man, so that there appeareth scarce a small shadow of those virtues wherewith he was replete? For how loose[3] are we in prayer? How slow and sluggish to do the duties of mercy? Yea, many are not only letted with filthiness and covetousness from giving liberally so much of their own as they ought, but they are so inflamed with a desire[4] to have, they are become so beastly through cruelty,[5] that they are not afraid to rob the poor of their substance, and to eat their very flesh.

3. *He saw in a vision.* Luke putteth *vision* for a kind of oracle coming from God, that we may know that Cornelius was brought unto the faith of Christ after an heavenly manner. And because men are oftentimes deceived with juggling, Luke setteth down the time to avoid all suspicion, when he mentioneth the *ninth hour*. And at that time they were wont to divide the day into twelve hours;

[1] "Probatum," approved by. [2] "Quum tam multa offendicula occurrerent," when so many obstacles or offences stood in the way.
[3] "Quantus...torpor," how great our torpor or sluggishness. [4] "Insana cupidine," an insane desire. [5] "Tanta crudelitate efferati sunt," so rage with cruelty.

from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof. Whereupon it followeth that it was fair daylight when the angel appeared, that the vision might be more evident. Although there were always seals added unto visions, that they might free the servants of God from fear of illusions, because when he appeared in dreams, yet were there such marks of certainty imprinted in their minds as would not suffer them to doubt.

4. *And he beheld, and was afraid.* Luke expresseth his attentiveness in plain words, that we may know that it was no vain imagination which came upon the man as he was sleeping or doing some other thing. The fear wherewith he was taken[1] proceeded from the perceiving of the majesty of God;[2] for so soon as men conceive the presence of God, they must needs be afraid and cast down with fear. And whereas his words do no whit terrify us, that must be imputed to our sluggishness, because we do not know nor perceive that it is God which speaketh. But the godly, to whom God revealeth himself in his word, do tremble when they hear it, as Isaiah saith, (lxvi. 2, 5.) Furthermore, the sight of God is unto them terrible, not that they may always lie confounded, and be swallowed up of fear, but only that they may humbly address themselves to reverence him.

What is it, Lord? It appeareth plainly by this answer, that Cornelius' mind was touched with religion; that he knew that he had to deal with God. Therefore the common translation hath it evil,[3] *Who art thou, Lord?* And it is likely that that which is there read was put in instead of this, forasmuch as in the Greek text there is no doubtfulness, whereby the interpreter might be deceived, and all the copies agree together in this reading, τί ἐστι. And assuredly, when Cornelius perceived that it is God, he sub-

[1] "Terror quo correptus est," the terror with which he was seized.
[2] "Ex sensu Divinæ Majestatis," from a sense of the Divine Majesty.
[3] "Habet male," is inaccurate.

mitteth himself to obey; as the answer is nothing but a commandment.

Thy prayers and alms. Because God seemeth to be after a sort deaf, unless he answer our petitions by and by, hence cometh that speech, that our prayers come unto him, and that he is mindful thereof. Furthermore, the angel assigneth this as the cause why God vouchsafeth to show to Cornelius the light of his gospel; because he hath heard his prayers and accepted his alms. Whence we gather that virtues and good works do not only please God, but that they are also adorned with this excellent reward, that he heapeth upon us and enricheth us with greater gifts for their sakes; according to that, "To him that hath shall be given," (Matth. xiii. 12.) And again, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee over many things," (Matth. xxv. 21.) For God doth after this sort extol his by a continual course of his gifts, as it were by certain steps, until he bring them to the top.

But the Papists abuse this place two ways; for because God respected the prayers and alms of Cornelius, so that he endued him with the faith of the gospel, they wrest that unto the preparations which they have invented, as if a man did get faith by his own industry and power, and did prevent[1] the grace of God by the merits of works. Secondly, they gather, generally, that good works are meritorious in such sort, that the graces of God are increased in every man as he hath deserved. In the former they are too childishly deceived, whilst that they feign that the works of Cornelius were acceptable to God before he was illuminate by faith. And we need not to fet [seek] a proof far to refute their ignorance; for he could obtain nothing by prayer unless faith went before, which only openeth the gate for us to pray; and Augustine weigheth that well and wisely, who derideth Pelagius, because he said that faith was obtained by prayers before it was in

[1] "Antevertat," anticipate.

man in any measure: Who (saith he) will seek a physician save he who is already healed in some part? And it is the health of faith which teacheth us to knock. Furthermore, the fear of God and godliness do plainly prove that he was regenerate by the Spirit. For Ezekiel giveth[1] this praise to God alone, that he frameth the hearts of men to fear him, (Ezek. xxxii. 40.) And Isaiah saith, that the Spirit of the fear of God resteth in Christ, (Isa. xi. 2,) that we may know that he can be found no where save only in his members. Therefore it is too great folly to feign a man in the person of Cornelius, who, having nature for his guide, can attain unto eternal life, or endeavour to come thither. Therefore they reason blockishly, that we are able to prevent the grace of God with the merits of works.

As touching the second error, when as they imagine that every one of us is increased with greater graces as he hath deserved, it may easily be refuted. First, we deny that we have any good works which God hath not freely given us; secondly, we say that the right use of gifts cometh from him also, and that this is his second grace, that we use his former gifts well. Thirdly, we deny that we deserve any thing by our works,[2] which are always lame and corrupt. Good works do indeed purchase for us the increase of grace, but not by their own desert. For they cannot be acceptable to God without pardon, which they obtain by the benefit of faith. Wherefore it is faith alone which maketh them acceptable.[3] Thus did Cornelius obtain more perfect knowledge of Christ by his prayers and alms, but in that he had God to be favourable and merciful to his prayers and alms, that did depend upon faith.

Furthermore, if good works be esteemed [estimated] by faith, it is of mercy, and not of merit, that God doth allow [approve] them. For because faith findeth no worthy thing in us whereby we can please God, it borroweth that of Christ which we want. And this is too perverse, that though the

[1] "Vendicat," claimeth. [2] "Conciliant," procure. [3] "Quæ pretium illis statuit," which gives them their value.

Papists have this word merit every now and then in their mouths, and cease not to puff up fools with a vain confidence, yet they bring nothing whereby the studies of men may be moved to do well. For they leave their consciences always in a doubt, and command men to doubt whether their words please God or not. Must not men's minds need faint when they are possessed with such fear? But as for us, though we take merit from works, yet when as we teach that there is a reward laid up for them, we prick men forward with an excellent and sharp prick, to desire to live well. For we address ourselves then joyfully to serve God, when we are persuaded that we lose not our labour. And whereas there appeareth at this day no more plentiful abundance of the gifts of the Spirit, but that the more part doth rather wither away, we must thank our unthankfulness for that. For as God did crown Cornelius' prayers and alms, and holiness, with the most precious pearl of his gospel, so there is just cause why he should suffer us to starve, being brought unto hungry poverty, when as he seeth us abuse the treasure of his gospel wickedly and ungodlily.

Yet here may a question be asked, Whether faith require the knowledge of Christ, or it be content with the simple persuasion of the mercy of God? for Cornelius seemeth to have known nothing at all concerning Christ. But it may be proved by sound proofs that faith cannot be separated from Christ; for if we lay hold upon the bare majesty of God, we are rather confounded with his glory, than that we feel any taste of his goodness. Therefore, Christ must come between, that the mind of man may conceive that God is merciful. And it is not without cause that he is called the image of the invisible God, (Col. i. 15;) because the Father offereth himself to be holden in his face alone. Moreover, seeing that he is the way, the truth, and the life, (John xiv. 6;) whithersoever thou goest without him, thou shalt be enwrapped on every side in errors, and death shall meet you [thee] on every side. We may easily answer concerning Cornelius. All spiritual gifts are offered unto us in

Christ; and especially whence cometh regeneration, save only because we are ingrafted into the death of Christ, our old man is crucified? (Rom. vi. 5, 6.) And if Cornelius were made partaker of the Spirit of Christ, there is no cause why we should think that he was altogether void of his faith; neither had he so embraced the worship of the true God, (whom the Jews alone did worship,) but that he had also heard[1] somewhat of the promised Mediator; though the knowledge of him were obscure and entangled, yet was it some. Whosoever came at that time into Judea he was enforced to hear somewhat of the Messiah, yea, there was some fame of him spread through countries which were far off.[2] Wherefore, Cornelius must be put in the catalogue of the old fathers, who hoped for salvation of the Redeemer before he was revealed. And it is properly[3] [improperly] said of Augustine, that Peter grounded his faith; whereas it had now before a firm foundation; although Augustine thinketh as we do in the thing itself, who affirmeth plainly, that Cornelius could not pray unless he had faith, in his Book of the Predestination of Saints, and other places.

5. *Now send to Joppa.* God dealt most favourably with Cornelius, in that he doth not command him to go himself, but to send messengers unto Peter, that he may stay quietly at home, and that Peter may endure the toil of the journey for his sake. But let us not wonder that Cornelius was so courteously handled, seeing that God thrusteth the ministers of his word daily upon the unwilling; so that he appeareth of his accord to those which do not seek him, as he saith by Isaiah, (Isaiah lxv. 1.) But why doth not the angel rather teach him?[4] For this seemeth an inconvenient[5] thing that he resigneth his office to a mortal man; for the oracle should have had greater authority than when the gospel

[1] "Quin aliquid simul... audesset," without having at the same time heard. [2] "Longe dissitas," widely separated. [3] "Improprie," improperly. [4] "Doctoris partes implet," fulfil the office of teacher. [5] "Parum rationi consentaneum," little accordant with reason.

is preached to him by a mortal man. As when Christ appeared to Paul by a vision, he set, notwithstanding, Ananias to teach him, that he might by such an example establish the ministry of the preaching of the gospel, which he committed to his Church; so now the angel giveth place to Peter, that he may execute the office committed unto him by Christ. Therefore, whosoever will be the disciple of Christ, and be illuminated by the (heavenly) light of the heavenly wisdom, let him not grudge to use attentiveness and docility toward the external voice of men, which Christ useth as an instrument, and whereunto he will have our faith annexed. And we see how sore God hath punished their furious pride, who, contemning preaching, have looked for[1] revelations from heaven. For since God will be heard in men, the ministers to whom he hath given his word[2] cannot be contemned without contempt and reproach of him. Nevertheless, I confess that the spirits must be proved, (1 John iv. 1,) that we hear not without choice whosoever do pretend that they are ministers of Christ. But because faith cometh by hearing, (Rom. x. 17,) no man shall attain thereunto which shall refuse and despise the word when it is preached.

7. *And after that the angel which spake to Cornelius was departed, he called two of his servants, and a godly soldier, of those which did wait on him:*
8. *And when he had told them all things, he sent them to Joppa.*
9. *On the morrow, as they journeyed, and drew nigh to the city, Peter went up into the highest part of the house to pray, about the sixth hour;*
10. *And he was fasting; therefore he would eat. And in the mean season, while they made ready, there fell upon him an excess of mind.*[3]
11. *He saw heaven open, and a vessel coming down upon him*

[1] "Captarunt," have caught at, longed for.
[2] "Apud quos verbum suum deposuit," with whom he has deposited.
[3] "Mentis excessus," a suspension of mind or thought, a trance.

like to a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth;

12. *Wherein were all four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and birds of heaven.*
13. *And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat.*
14. *And Peter said, Not so, Lord; because I have never eaten any common or unclean thing.*
15. *And the voice said to him again, Make not thou those things common which God hath made clean.*
16. *And this was done thrice; and the vessel was taken up again into heaven.*

7. *And after that the angel.* Luke declareth here how ready Cornelius was to obey when as he maketh no tarriance, but doth that with all diligence which he was commanded to do. And this was the cause that he was so forward, because he believed the promise; as want of faith is the cause why we are so slow to follow God. Angels come not flying to us from heaven that they may appoint us certain men, but that voice of Christ soundeth in all men's ears. "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," (Matth. vii. 7.) How is it that of an hundred scarce one or two will stir one foot, that some creep so little that they profit but a little, but because we do not indeed believe the promise? Therefore, let us learn that we must not drive off from day to day, but every man must hasten thither whither he is called, so soon as he heareth the voice of God.

Two of his servants. Cornelius had this reward for being so diligent in teaching his family, that he had faithful and honest servants who were willing to do him service; and also such as that he might commit any thing to them. On the other side, the Lord doth oftentimes punish masters with just punishments who have no regard to instruct their families. For they find those justly stubborn and unfaithful whom they would not frame unto godliness and the fear of God, and also they are afraid of their treachery.

A godly soldier. Forasmuch as this soldier was much

conversant with Cornelius, he had also taught him to fear God, as well as his household servants. It is meet that we call to mind here that which I touched before, that there is no kind of life which excuseth us but that we must worship God purely. For a soldier's life was at that time most corrupt; for they were fallen unto filthy licentiousness, from the ancient discipline, and yet the Spirit of God beareth record in this place of the godliness of soldiers. Wherefore, there is no cause why they should require a calling that is free from worshipping God, under colour of warfare, who would by one means or other be free from all righteousness. If they deny that they can serve God because they be soldiers, they shall have these two soldiers meet judges and witnesses against them at the last day, who shall condemn them. And in the mean season, those brain-sick fellows are condemned who cry that it is unlawful for Christians to carry weapons. For these men were warriors, and yet godly, and when they embrace Christ they forsake not their former kind of life; they cast not away their armour as hurtful, nor yet forsake their calling.

8. Whereas Cornelius expoundeth the whole matter to the soldier and his servants, it tendeth to this end, that he may the more encourage them to give ear to the commandment, which they see is rather a commandment of God than of man; and he is not afraid to make known unto them so great a matter whom he had instructed well before.

9. *On the morrow, as they journeyed.* As Luke declared that Cornelius was admonished by an oracle to send for Peter, so now he setteth down another vision, whereby Peter is commanded to come to him. Whereby it appeareth that all this matter was governed by the wonderful counsel of God, who doth both make Cornelius apt to be taught, yea, he kindleth in him a study and desire to learn, and, on the other side, maketh Peter willing to take in hand to teach

him. But we must note the circumstances whereby he maketh the history more evident.

Peter went up upon the house, that he might pray alone by himself; for a quiet and lone place is a great help to prayer, which thing Christ himself did not omit, that the mind, being free from all things which might call it away, might be the more earnest and bent toward God. And the Jews had another manner of houses and buildings than we use; for they had walks upon the tops of their houses. The sixth hour was then noon. And it is not to be doubted but that he got himself to prayer then according to his custom. For because we are drawn away with divers businesses;[1] and there is no end of turmoiling, unless we bridle ourselves, it is good to have certain hours appointed for prayer, not because we are tied to hours, but lest we be unmindful of prayer, which ought to be preferred before all cares and business. Finally, we must think the same thing of time which we think of place; to wit, that they are certain remedies whereby our infirmities is holpen; which, if the apostles counted fit for them, how much must more the sluggish and slow use the same?

10. *Excess of mind.* Because our minds are wholly, as it were, set upon the earth, to the end Peter might the better comprehend the oracle, it was meet that his mind should be, as it were, moved from his place and carried up; and by this means was he prepared to receive the oracle, when as he is carried up above the world after an unwonted manner.

11. The opening of heaven signifieth, in my judgment, another thing in this place than in the seventh chapter. For it is said there that heaven was opened to Stephen, that he did behold the glory of Christ; in this place Peter saw our heaven which we see divided, so that a sheet came thence.

[1] "Totum fero diem," almost the whole day, omitted.

12. If any man ask how he could see a great multitude of living creatures at once, the question is easily answered. For Luke saith, *All manner*, because there were there divers kinds mixed one with another. Therefore he beginneth not at the first kind, that he may prosecute the number unto the last. Again, we must not measure this seeing according to the manner of men, because the trance gave Peter other eyes. But before we go any farther we must know the end of the vision. Some dispute more subtilely about the same than the place requireth, in my judgment. Therefore, I think that it is generally showed to Peter that the difference which God had made in times past is now taken away. And as he had put difference between living creatures, so, having chosen to himself one people, he counted all nations unclean and profane.

Now the difference between living creatures being taken away, he teacheth by the consequent that there is no such disagreement among men any longer as there was in times past, and that there is no difference between the Jew and the Grecian. Hereby Peter is admonished that he do not abhor the Gentiles as being unclean. Undoubtedly, God meant to encourage Peter to come to Cornelius without fear; but he had separated one people to himself from the rest, as saith Moses in his song, when as the Most High did distribute the nations, he put his lot in Jacob, &c., (Deut. xxxii. 9;) therefore he called it his inheritance and peculiar people.

According to this order, it had not been lawful to Peter to bring the covenant of salvation unto the Gentiles; for that was to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs, (Matth. xv. 26,) unless, peradventure, they would be circumcised, and embrace the Jewish religion; for it was lawful to receive such as did yield themselves. Wherefore, when as the apostles were sent before to preach the gospel, they were forbidden to turn in unto the Gentiles, (Matth. x. 5.) And forasmuch as the preaching of the gospel is a most holy and weighty matter, Peter ought not to have attempted any thing therein with a doubting and wavering

mind. Therefore, to the end he may be assured of his calling, God showeth manifestly, as in a picture, that the legal difference between the clean and unclean is abolished; whence he may gather that the wall which was heretofore between the Jews and the Gentiles is now pulled down. And Paul saith, that it is a mystery hid from the beginning of the world, that the Gentiles are made partakers of the same salvation with the people of God, and ingrafted into one body, (Eph. ii. 16; Eph. iii. 6.)

Therefore Peter durst never have opened the gate of heaven unto the Gentiles, unless God himself had made a plain way and entrance for all men, by taking away the wall of separation. I said even now that there was no time wherein it was not lawful to admit the Gentiles unto the worship of God, so they were circumcised; but so long as they continued in uncircumcision they were strangers with God. But now God made the covenant of life common to all the whole world, which he had shut up in one nation, as in a treasure. Whence we gather that this vision is not a little profitable for us; for, when as it teacheth that the difference between Jews and Gentiles continued only for a season, it is as much as if God should pronounce from heaven that he receiveth all people of the world into favour, that he may be God over all. Finally, we have an evident proclamation from heaven, which putteth us in hope of eternal life.

But some men will object that Peter was taught before concerning this matter; for he and the rest were commanded to preach the gospel throughout the whole world, (Mark xvi. 15.) Therefore, he was either ignorant of his calling, or else this vision was superfluous. I answer, that there was such and so great difficulty in the novelty itself, that they could not acquaint themselves therewith by and by. They knew both the prophecies of the prophets, and the late commandment of Christ concerning the calling of the Gentiles by the gospel; but when they come to the push, they doubted nevertheless, being stricken with the strangeness of the thing. Wherefore, it is no marvel if the

Lord confirm Peter with a new sign, concerning which thing we must also say somewhat as yet in the next chapter.

13. *A voice from heaven.* The voice came from heaven as did the sheet, that Peter might know that both came from God; neither had the sight done him any good, unless God had with this voice made clean those things which were before unclean. Whereas some pick an allegory out of the word *kill*, as if God did signify that men are sacrificed to him by the spiritual sword of the gospel; I do not prosecute that, but plainness pleaseth me better, that God doth take away by this voice the law concerning the choice of beasts, that he may also teach that he rejecteth no people, (Rom. xv. 16.) For if by the former word be meant *sacrificing*, what shall *eat* signify?

14. *Not so, Lord.* This is the voice of him which doth as well refuse, as also object to God his own commandment; for he is afraid, for good causes, to touch that which he knew was forbidden him in the law of God, (Lev. xi. 21, &c.) Therefore he objecteth to God the law which he himself made, lest he should break the same unadvisedly. There was a certain show of repugnancy between the law and the vision; therefore Peter is not hasty, but desireth first to have his doubt dissolved before he depart from observing the law. Yet it is a strange matter why Peter resisted more in meats than did Abraham in killing his son; for Abraham [might have] had more things to object, (Gen. xxii. 9, 10.) I dare not here say that that befel Peter which is too common among men, to stand more about outward and small matters than about the chief points of the law; I rather make that answer which is out of doubt, that Abraham's mind was so persuaded, and that he was furnished with such power of the Spirit, that he overcame with lofty and heroical fortitude all those things which might have hindered him. But the Spirit of God wrought slenderly[1] in

[1] "Lente," slowly.

Peter; whereby we are taught that every small or light thing doth cause us to doubt, unless the Lord do furnish us with counsel and constancy to overcome all fear. Yet Peter dealeth very godly and very religiously, in that being in doubt amidst divers cogitations, he dare do nothing until it better appear what he ought to follow. *Common* signifieth in this place profane. For because the Lord (as we have said) had chosen the Jews to be a peculiar people, he had prescribed unto them this rite and manner of living, that it might distinguish them from the profane Gentiles. Therefore, whatsoever the Gentiles did use contrary to the rule of the law, that did they call common, because there was nothing pure or holy but that which God had appointed for the use of his people.

15. *Which God hath made clean.* He speaketh of meats; but this sentence must be extended unto all parts of the life. It is word for word, *That which God hath made clean, do not thou make profane;* but the sense is, It is not for us to allow or condemn any thing; but as we stand and fall by the judgment of God alone, so is he judge of all things, (Rom. xiv. 4.) As touching meats, after the abrogating of the law, God pronounceth that they are all pure and clean. If, on the other side, there start up a mortal man, making a new difference, forbidding certain, he taketh unto himself the authority and power of God by sacrilegious boldness. Of this stamp were the old heretics, Montanus, Priscillianus, the Donatists, the Tatians, and all the Encratites. Afterwards the Pope, to the end he might bind all those sects in a bundle, made a law concerning meats. And there is no cause why the patrons of this impiety should babble that they do not imagine any uncleanness in meats, but that men are forbidden to eat flesh upon certain days, to tame the flesh. For seeing they eat such meats as are most fit, both for delicacy and also for riot, why do they abstain from eating bacon, as from some great offence, save only because they imagine that that is unclean and polluted which is forbidden by the law of their idol? With like pride doth the

tyranny of the Pope rage in all parts of life; for there is nothing wherein he layeth not snares to entangle the miserable consciences of men. But let us trust to the heavenly oracle, and freely despise all his inhibitions. We must always ask the mouth of the Lord, that we may thereby be assured what we may lawfully do; forasmuch as it was not lawful even for Peter to make that profane which was lawful by the Word of God.

Furthermore, this is a place of great importance to beat down the frowardness of men, which they use too much in perverse judgments. There is no man almost which doth not grant liberty to himself to judge of other men's doings. Now, as we are churlish and malicious, we lean more toward the worse part, so that we take from God that which is his. This voice alone ought to suffice to correct such boldness, That it is not lawful for us to make this or that unclean, but that this power belongeth to God alone. And also in these words is given us to understand, that the Jews were not therefore the holy people of the Lord, because they excelled through their own worthiness, but only by reason of God's adoption. Now, after that God had received the Gentiles into the society of the covenant, they have all equal right.

16. *This was done thrice.* The repetition of the vision served for the confirmation of Peter, lest any doubt[1] should remain in his mind. Whence we gather how deeply the observing of the law was rooted in his mind. And I know no reason why God left him in a dump, [perplexed,] until, by the event which followed, he might learn the cause of the vision, save only because being astonished he did not desire to know what this thing meant; although it was all in good time, that the messengers of Cornelius should come shortly after to interpret it. The *vessel* was at length taken up again into heaven, that Peter might be certified that this message came from heaven, [God.]

[1] "Vel anxietas vel scrupulus," or anxiety or scruple, omitted.

17. *And as Peter doubted in himself what vision this should be which he had seen, behold, two men, sent from Cornelius, inquiring for Simon's house, stood at the door.*
18. *And when they had called, they asked whether Simon, surnamed Peter, did lodge there.*
19. *And as Peter thought upon the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men seek thee.*
20. *Arise, go down, and go with them, doubting nothing, because I have sent them.*
21. *And when Peter was come down unto the men which were sent from Cornelius unto him, he said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek. What is the cause wherefore ye come hither?*
22. *They said to him, Cornelius the captain, [centurion,] a just man, and one that feareth God, having testimony of all the nation of the Jews, was warned by an oracle by a holy angel, that he should call thee into his house, and should hear of thee words.*
23. *Furthermore, when he had called them in, he lodged them.*[1]

17. Peter was taught not only by the vision, but also by the Word of God; and yet in seeing he saw not, until the Spirit is unto him an interpreter; a most excellent mirror of our slackness. Although we be yet far unlike to Peter; for we are so far from understanding by and by what God will, or to what end he speaketh to us, that many interpretations are scarce sufficient for us. But we must also note that which Luke addeth, that Peter did think earnestly upon the vision, to wit, after that he was come to himself again after his amazedness; for this was a token of godly reverence, that he did not carelessly suffer the vision to escape him. Therefore, the Lord opened to him when he did knock, (Matth. vii. 7.) And we are justly plagued for our sluggishness, in that we profit no better in the Word of the Lord, seeing we are so cold, and have so small desire to inquire.

20. *Go, doubting nothing.* The Scripture useth this word often, when it will express of what sort the obedience of

[1] "Accepit hospitio," he hospitably entertained them.

faith ought to be. So Paul, in the fourth chapter to the Romans, (Rom. iv. 19,) when as he commendeth the faith of Abraham, saith, That he doubted not when as the Lord promised him seed, being now aged and past hope of children. And in the fourteenth, (Rom. xiv. 23,) in treating of meats, he condemneth doubting consciences. And it is properly to reason on both sides, (as they say,) when as we are carried hither and thither by course, by gathering contrary reasons. But we must not follow God with a doubtful and wavering, but with a quiet and constant mind. In sum, the Lord will have us to attribute so much to him, that when we hear him we dispute no longer what we have need to do, but that we set down for a certainty, that that must be done which he commandeth. And surely it is meet that his will should show us the way, when all clouds are driven away, and that it should subdue all our senses unto it, unto willing obedience, all reasoning [disputation] being broken off; which is also better gathered by the next text. For the reason is added, why it is not lawful for Peter to suspend his judgment in an uncertain matter, because God is the author of the business; because it is as much as if it should be said, that we ought to be content with the beck of God alone, that we may obey his commandment. And hereby are we also admonished that men's consciences shall by no other means be quiet, that they safely do that which they do, than when being taught by the Word of God, they determine that they do nothing without his commandment and conduct.

21. *Behold, I am he whom ye seek.* Luke declareth now how ready Peter was to obey; secondly, that he understood at length, by the messengers, to what end the vision was showed unto him. For he heareth that he is called by Cornelius, a man that is a Gentile, whom he would have counted profane, and unworthy of his company, unless his judgment had been corrected with this voice, "That which God calleth pure, judge not thou to be common." This is to be wise indeed, when as abandoning all vain confidence,

and correcting our stubbornness, the authority of God doth so pull us unto it, and doth so possess our minds, that we count nothing right but that which it prescribeth.

22. *Cornelius, a just man.* Cornelius' servants commend their master not ambitiously, or to the end they may flatter him, but that Peter may the less abhor his company.[1] And for this cause they say that he was approved of the Jews, that Peter may know that he was not estranged from true and sincere godliness. For even those which were superstitious, though they served idols, did boast that they were worshippers of God. But Cornelius could not have the Jews, who retained the worship of the true God alone, to be witnesses of his godliness, unless he had professed that he worshipped the God of Abraham with them. Furthermore, as this was a rare example, so it ought to have moved Peter not a little. Although they lean most of all to this argument, that they may persuade him that which they go about, that all this matter is governed by the commandment of God, as if they should say, That he is not so much called by a mortal man as by God, who had so commanded by his angel.

23. And Peter also, being overcome with the authority of God, deliberateth no longer, but lodgeth the men, that he may go with them forthwith. So we must meekly submit ourselves to God; and there remaineth nothing after that we know his will, but that we run speedily thither whither he calleth us. There is no difficulty in the rest.

The day following Peter went forth with them, and certain of the brethren that were of Joppa accompanied him.

24. *And the next day they entered into Cesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, having called his kinsfolks and friends together.*

[1] "Ab ejus congressu minus abhorreat," may be less averse to meet with him.

25. *And when Peter entered in, Cornelius meeting him, and falling down at his feet, worshipped him.*
26. *But Peter lifted him up, saying, Arise, I am also a man.*
27. *And when he had talked with him, he entered in, and he found many assembled together.*
28. *And he said to them, You know that it is wickedness for a man that is a Jew to join himself to a man that is a stranger, or to enter in unto him; but God hath showed to me that no man must be called common or unclean.*
29. *For this cause I came without gainsaying, when I was called; therefore, I demand for what cause ye have called me.*

The day following he went forth. It should seem that they arrived a little before night,[1] because they were not as yet entered the city at noon, and the vision which was showed thrice asked no small time. Therefore, when they had taken their rest all night, they address themselves to return. Again, there was a point of courtesy in that some of the faithful do accompany Peter, who were sent, as it is to be thought, by the whole church, to bring him even to Cesarea. These men journey with Peter for good-will and honour's sake; but the Lord bringeth them, that they may be witnesses of his grace. So that they are bountifully rewarded for their thankfulness, when as for confirmation of their faith they see the kingdom of Christ spread abroad even unto the Gentiles.

24. *Cornelius waited for them.* Luke doth not only commend the godly affection of Cornelius in this point, that he waited earnestly for Peter's coming, but because he would have his friends and kinsfolks to be companions with him in the faith. This was a thing not without great danger, to call together a company of men, that they might embrace a new kind of religion. And there wanted not reasons, under colour whereof he might have flattered [excused] himself; for he was not commanded to call others to accom-

[1] "Sub vesperum," towards evening.

pany him, but rather they were passed over, and he himself was chosen to be made partaker of so great goodness; but he considered with himself how much he was indebted[1] both to the glory of God, and also to the salvation of his brethren. He knew that it was an unjust thing, and a point of discourtesy, to provide for himself alone, and not to regard others. He counted it a point of filthy carelessness[2] to hide the treasure of the gospel under the ground. Therefore, he did that which the Lord requireth of all his by Isaiah and Micah, that every one exhort his brother (taking him as it were by the hand) unto the faith.

Therefore, Cornelius hath taught us by his example, that when God revealeth himself unto us we must not choke the light of his knowledge with sloth or fear, but we must rather endeavour that our faith may shine before others to give light, and to show the way to them; for the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven is not such, that even the least portion can be taken from us, if many be made partakers thereof; but if others be made co-heirs with us, it shall rather increase our glory. Furthermore, we must mark how far he is from vain-glory; for he calleth them to be his school-fellows, being himself ready to learn. This is the true study of godliness, when as together with zeal there appeareth such plainness,[3] that we are not ashamed to depend upon the mouth of God. For many are pricked forward with ambition, to employ themselves in teaching the ignorant; and foolish babbling discovereth their folly, when as they huddle out words more earnestly, and they would have none heard but themselves. But this alone ought to be the drift of all men, to bring themselves and all the whole world under God, that when men are subdued unto true humility, he alone may have the pre-eminence. Let not him which excelleth in the faculty and grace of teaching refuse to teach his brethren, so that he be free from boasting, and proud desire to excel. Let him to whom it

[1] "Quantum . . . deberet," how much he owed. [2] "Fœdæ socordiæ," shameful sloth. [3] "Simplicitas," simplicity, singleness of mind.

was not granted to be a teacher keep himself within his bounds. Let neither of them desire mastership, as James teacheth them; but let one so edify another, that neither the learned, neither the unlearned, be ashamed to be brought into order.

Notwithstanding, it is demanded,[1] what kinsfolks he could have in Judea, seeing that he was an alien, and was come thither only by reason of war, which continued but for a short time? As I affirm nothing, so I embrace this as most probable, that he had some in his garrison which were his kinsmen; for neighbours, and those which were of acquaintance, were wont to serve under one captain. And we need not doubt of this, but that Cornelius' kinsmen were desirous to be under him, forasmuch as he was a centurion. He calleth familiar friends αναγκαιους, as those are called of the Latins, *Necessarii*, which are nearer together.[2]

25. *Falling down at his feet, he worshipped.* Here is the word προσεκυνησεν, which signifieth to testify honour or worship, either by bowing the knee, or ducking down the head, or by any other gesture. Now, the question is, whether Peter refuteth this worship for modesty's sake only, or he disalloweth it as a thing altogether unlawful? It appeareth that Cornelius' fact displeased Peter, by the reason which is by and by added, *Arise, for even I am a man.* For we may gather that there was some divine thing in that worship, because he did ascribe unto mortal man the honour which is due to God alone. But we must not think that Cornelius did count Peter instead of God; for if he translated God's honour unto mortal man, where is that godliness and religion, with the title whereof he was of late adorned? Therefore, I think that he meant nothing less than to spoil God of his lawful worship, that he might give it to man; but forasmuch as he meant to give singular

[1] "Quæritur tamen," it is asked, however. [2] "Qui arctiore vinculo inter se conjuncti sunt," who are bound together by a closer tie.

honour unto the prophet and apostle of Christ, he fell into an immoderate token of reverence, and so he offended in excess.

For it can scarce be expressed in words how prone men are to fall to superstition, when as that honour is given to the ministers of Christ, which hath any small show of divine worship; for we fall easily unawares into that whereof we thought full little. There were less danger in a king or in the chief chieftains of this world; for he which falleth down before a king keepeth himself within the bounds of earthly and civil honour. But the case standeth otherwise in the ministers of Christ; for as their office is spiritual, so if any man fall down at their feet to worship them, this honour hath in it some spiritual thing. For we must put a difference between civil worship, which men use among themselves in respect of civil order, and that under which is contained religion, or which respecteth directly the honour of God; as also between laws which are made for temporal regimen, or which bind the conscience. For certain foolish men are deceived too far, who think that kneeling is in this place condemned simply and of itself. But this is that which I said, Cornelius doth not here salute his proconsul, or the emperor, after any civil sort; but being stricken with wondering when he saw Peter, he honoureth him as he would have honoured God, if he had been present; so that he giveth man more than is meet, having, as it were, forgotten himself. He thought nothing less (as I have already said) than to rob God of any part of his honour, that he might give that to man which he took from him. But when as the worship which is given to man hath somewhat which is, as it were, linked with the honour of God, men fall into a fault contrary to their hope and opinion, so that they extol man above his degree, and give him the worship which is due to God.

The Papists, omitting that distinction, snatch only at one member, for they handle religious worship only. To the end they may ascribe some part thereof, with some honest colour, unto creatures, they cut [subdivide] it into *latria*, *dulia*, and

hyperdulia. They give *latria* to God alone; as if they should say, that the adoration of worship is due to him alone. They make *dulia* common to the dead and their bones, to images and pictures. They assign their *hyperdulia* to the Virgin Mary, and to the cross whereon Christ hanged. That I may omit to say that they babble through childish ignorance, how many of them do understand that rotten distinction? Neither do I speak only of the common sort, but of the chieftains. Therefore, all their worshippings must needs be infected and corrupt with wicked superstition, seeing they unadvisedly match creatures with God. But Luke saith not in this place that Cornelius gave to Peter *latria*, (or the honour due to God;) he useth only the general word *worshipped*, and he addeth, notwithstanding, that he was reproved, because he did wickedly extol man higher than became him. Surely, if that new opinion concerning the adoration which is called *dulia* had any place, Peter ought to have admonished Cornelius that he should not go beyond *dulia*. But because no worship whereunto religion is annexed, and the respect of God's honour, doth leave to God his honour untouched, what man soever it have; therefore, Peter is content with this one only reason, that he is a man. Moreover, I would gladly know of the Papists, whether they think that John was so blockish, that he would take the honour due to God, which they call *latria*, and give it to the angel? Surely, there was nothing else that caused him to worship the angel, save only too much and preposterous reverence, and that in honour of God, whose glory shone in the angel; notwithstanding his fact is condemned. Therefore, to the end we may give God that which is his own, let the spiritual worship, under which is comprehended religion, remain whole and sound to him.

28. *Ye know that it is not lawful.* This seemeth to be no friendly preface, and such as may rather harden[1] than win

[1] "Exasperet," exasperate.

their hearts, when as they hear that they are accounted so unclean, that with their familiarity and conference they pollute the saints; which must needs be a great reproach for them. But it was needful for Peter thus to speak, lest they should suspect that he had an evil conscience, because, contrary to the custom delivered by the fathers, he came.[1] But when as he affirmeth that he was sent of God, all such suspicion is taken away and purged. Moreover, he mitigateth very well by these words the offence which did stick in their minds, by reason of an old grudge which was between the Jews and the Gentiles, so that he could by no means have entered his speech better. For he pronounceth that those are now clean who were before unclean, so that they have mutual fellowship now with the saints. Furthermore, whereas he said that it was wickedness for the Jews to go in unto the Gentiles, we must know that this came not so much from the law, as from the observation of the fathers. God had forbidden, indeed, that they should (not) entangle themselves with marriages or covenants, (Deut. vii. 3;) they were never forbidden to eat with them, or to use the common businesses of life. But lest that familiarity might entice them into that which was forbidden, they observed the custom delivered by the fathers, so that they did not company together. It is to no end to dispute here whether that tradition did bind men's consciences; for Peter doth not teach[2] what is lawful according to God, but what was commonly used.

No man. He maketh the sum and end of the vision more plain, when he referreth that unto men which was spoken of meats. And whereas he saith, that no man is unclean, it may not be understood of (all) particular persons; for it is certain that all unbelievers are polluted with uncleanness of conscience, so that they pollute those things which are otherwise pure, when as they do but touch them. Paul also saith that their children remain unclean until they be cleansed by faith. Finally, if faith alone do purge

[1] "Quasi legis contemptor," as if he had been a despiser of the law, omitted. [2] "Ex professo," professedly, omitted.

and purify the hearts of men, unbelief doth make the same profane. But Peter[1] compareth the Jews and the Gentiles together in this place; and because the wall of separation was pulled down, and the covenant of life[2] is now common to them both alike, he saith that those are not to be counted aliens who are made partakers of God's adoption.

29. We must also note that which he addeth, that he came without gainsaying. For this is the holy silence of faith, when as without murmuring against God we receive that meekly which he commandeth, abandoning[3] all contrary reasons which intrude themselves.

30. *Then saith Cornelius, Four days ago, until this hour, I was fasting; and about the ninth hour I prayed at my house; and behold a man stood before me in a shining garment,*

31. *Who said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thy alms is come into remembrance before God.*

32. *Therefore send men to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; this man lodgeth in the house of Simon the tanner; when he shall be present he shall speak to thee.*

33. *Therefore, after that hour I sent unto thee, and thou hast done well that thou art come. Therefore, all we are now present before God, to hear all things which are appointed for thee of God.*

Because this answer of Cornelius containeth only the bare repetition of the history, I shall not need to stand long about that. The sum is, that he called Peter at the commandment of God.

30. *I was fasting.* Many Greek books[4] have ημην, I sat. The old interpreter omitteth the word fasting, which I think was done through error or negligence, because it is expressed in all the Greek books.[5] Furthermore, he maketh

[1] "Tantum," only, omitted. [2] "Et salutis," and salvation, omitted.
[3] "Procul abigendo," driving far away. [4] "Codices," manuscripts.
[5] "Codicibus," manuscripts.

express mention of fasting, partly that we may know that he prayed not coldly, or overfields[1] at that time; secondly, that the vision may be the less suspected. For doubtless the brain of a man that is fasting (where there is moderate sobriety) doth not easily admit any strong imaginations, wherein appear images and strange forms, whereby men are deceived.[2] Therefore Cornelius' meaning is, that he was earnestly bent to pray, at such time as the angel appeared to him, and that his mind was free from all such lets which use to make men subject to fantasies and imaginations.[3] And to the same end tendeth the circumstance of time, that this was done when it was now fair day-light, three hours before the going down of the sun.

A man stood in shining garment. He calleth him a man, whom he knew was an angel of God; but it is a common thing for the name of the visible form wherein God or his angels appear to be translated unto him or them; so Moses doth sometimes call them angels, and sometimes men, which appeared to Abraham in shape of men. The shining garment was a token of heavenly glory, and, as it were, a sign of the divine Majesty which appeared[4] in the angel. The evangelists declare, that there was such brightness in Christ's garment when he showed his glory to the three disciples in the mount. The same thing do they witness of the angels which were sent to testify Christ's resurrection. For, as the Lord beareth with our infirmity thus far that he commandeth his angels to descend under form of our flesh, so he casteth out upon them certain beams of his glory, that the commandments which he hath committed to them may be the more reverenced and believed. Here ariseth a question, whether that were a true and natural body, and whether that were a garment in deed, or Cornelius did only see such a shape and show; and though this be not so necessary to be known, and we can scarce affirm any thing for a truth,[5]

[1] "Defunctorie," perfunctorily. [2] "Hallucinationes in spectris," spectral delusions. [3] "Phantasmatibus ac spectris," phantasms and spectres. [4] "Quæ fulgere . . . debuit," which must have been refulgent. [5] "Pro certo," for certain.

yet it seemeth to me more probable as touching conjecture, that God to whom it belongeth to create all things gave to the angel a true body, and did clothe the same with a most gorgeous garment; but so soon as the angel had ended his embassage, I think he was restored to his own nature, the body and garment being brought to nought, and that he suffered no human thing[1] so long as he was in the shape of man.

33. *Therefore, we are all now present.* To the end Peter may be more ready and willing to teach, Cornelius affirmeth that himself and the rest will be apt to be taught, and ready to obey God; for this serveth not a little to move the teacher to take pains with the hearers, when as he hopeth assuredly that they shall profit thereby. These words, *before God*, may have a double meaning; they may either be an oath, or Cornelius may thereby simply profess that that company was gathered together at his house, as in the sight of God, that they may hear man's voice in like sort as if it proceeded out of God's own mouth. Whethersoever you choose, there shall be always one end;[2] for to the end Cornelius may the more procure the credit of his sincerity, he testifieth that he hath God before his eyes, whom no man may mock by dissimulation; and assuredly, so often as the Word of God is set before us, we must thus think with ourselves, that we have not to deal with a mortal man, but that God is present, and doth call us. For, from this respect of God ariseth the majesty of God's word, and reverence in hearing the same. Notwithstanding, he seemeth to promise unadvisedly for others in a matter so weighty, for who can be a fit borrow [cautioner] for another man's faith? But because every man had promised obedience for himself, he doth, for good causes, hope that they were so affectioned; and, undoubtedly, we may think that they had promised that they would be obedient to his sayings so soon as the matter was showed them, and that even then every one confirmed by himself that which one had spoken in the name of all.

[1] "Neque tamen humani quidquam passum," and that he had no human property. [2] "Idem semper erit finis," the result will be the same.

To hear all things. This only is true faith when we embrace not the one half of the Word of God alone, but addict [subject] ourselves wholly unto it; and yet, notwithstanding, there be few examples in the world of this full and universal faith, for the more part doth not submit themselves to the doctrine of God, as if they had made a covenant with God, save only so far forth as it pleaseth them. If any thing displease them they either carelessly contemn or mislike the same. But Cornelius doth wisely distinguish between God and man, for he maketh God the author of the doctrine, and leaveth nothing for man besides the ministry and embassage. "Thou shalt," saith he, "have attentive scholars, and those which will be obedient in all things which God hath commanded thee; that he alone may be principal, and thou only his minister; that he alone may speak but out of thy mouth," which thing God prescribeth to all his servants in the person of Ezekiel. "Take," saith he, "the word out of my mouth, and thou shalt show unto them from me," (Ezekiel xxxiii. 7.)

34. *And Peter opening his mouth said, Of a truth I find that God is no accepter of persons:*
35. *But in every nation he that feareth him, and doth righteousness, is accepted of him.*
36. *Concerning the thing which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all:)*
37. *Ye know how the word was spread throughout all Judea, beginning at Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;*
38. *How that God hath anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went doing good, and healing all those which were holden by the devil, because God was with him.*

34. *Opening his mouth.* We have already said, that the Scripture useth this phrase when it doth signify that there was any grave or weighty oration or speech made. In the fifth of Matthew, (Matth. v. 1,) it is said that Jesus opened his mouth when he would preach to his disciples, and intreat of most weighty matters, as if a man should say in Latin,

he began to speak, having first well bethought himself what he would speak.

In truth I find. Καταλαμβανεσθαι is to apprehend, or to gather by reasons, signs, and conjectures. Cornelius was a Gentile born, yet God heareth his prayers; he vouchsafeth to show him the light of the gospel; he appointed and sendeth an angel to him particularly; thereby doth Peter know, that, without respect of persons, those do please God which live godly and innocently. For before, (being wholly possessed with this prejudice, that the Jews alone were beloved of God, as they alone were chosen out of all people,) [nations,] he did not think that the grace of God could come unto others. He was not, indeed, so gross that he thought that godliness and innocency of life were condemned because they were in a man that was a Gentile; but, seeing he did simply snatch at that,[1] that all those were estranged from the kingdom of God, and were profane, which were uncircumcised, he entangleth himself unawares in that so filthy an error, that God did despise his pure worship and an holy life, where there was no circumcision; because uncircumcision made all virtues unsavoury to the Jews. By which example, we are taught how greatly we ought to beware of prejudices, which make us oftentimes judge amiss.

Furthermore, we must note what the word *person* doth signify, because many are thereby deceived, whilst that they expound it generally, that one man is preferred before another. So Pelagius denied in times past that some are chosen and some are [re]proved[2] of God; because God did not accept persons. But by this word we must understand the external state or appearance, as they call it; and whatsoever is about man himself, which doth either bring him in favour, or cause him to be hated; riches, nobility, multitude of servants, honour, do make a man to be in great favour; poverty, baseness of lineage, and such like things, make him to be despised. In this respect, the Lord doth oftentimes

[1] "Illud arriperet," laid hold of the fact. [2] "Reprobari," reprobated.

forbid the accepting of persons, because men cannot judge aright so often as external respects do lead them away from the matter.[1] In this place, it is referred unto the nation; and the meaning is, that circumcision is no let, but that God may allow[2] righteousness in a man that is a Gentile. But it shall seem by this means that God did respect persons for a time. For, when as he did choose the Jews to be his people, passing over the Gentiles, did he not respect persons? I answer, that the cause of this difference ought not to be sought in the persons of men, but it doth wholly depend upon the hidden counsel of God. For, in that he rather adopted Abraham, that with him he might make his covenant, than the Egyptians, he did not this being moved with any external respect, but (all) the whole cause remained in his wonderful counsel. Therefore, God was never tied to persons.

Notwithstanding, the doubt is not as yet dissolved,[3] because it cannot be denied but that circumcision did please God, so that he counted him one of his people who had that token of sanctification. But we may easily answer this also, that circumcision followed after the grace of God, forasmuch as it was a seal thereof. Whereupon it followeth that it was no cause thereof. Nevertheless, it was unto the Jews a pledge of free adoption; in such sort, that uncircumcision did not hinder God, but that he might admit what Gentiles he would unto the society of the same salvation. But the coming of Christ had this new and especial thing, that after that the wall of separation was pulled down, (Ephes. ii. 14,) God did embrace the whole world generally. And this do the words *in every nation* import. For so long as Abraham's seed was the holy inheritance of God, the Gentiles might seem to be quite banished from his kingdom; but when Christ was given to be a light of the Gen-

[1] "Judicem a causa abducunt," lead the judge away from the cause.

[2] "Gratam habeat ac probet," may approve and be pleased with.

[3] "Nondum tamen soluta est difficultas," the difficulty, however, is not yet solved.

tiles, the covenant of eternal life began to be common to all alike.

35. *He which feareth God, and doth righteousness.* In these two members is comprehended the integrity of all the whole life. For the fear of God is nothing else but godliness and religion; and *righteousness* is that equity which men use among themselves, taking heed lest they hurt any man, and studying to do good to all men. As the law of God consisteth upon [of] these two parts, (which is the rule of good life,) so no man shall prove himself to God but he which shall refer and direct all his actions to this end, neither shall there be any sound thing in all offices, [duties,] unless the whole life be grounded in the fear of God. But it seemeth that this place doth attribute the cause of salvation unto the merits of works. For if works purchase favour for us with God, they do also win life for us, which is placed in the love of God towards us. Some do also catch at the word *righteousness*, that they may prove that we are not justified freely by faith, but by works. But this latter thing is too frivolous. For I have already showed that it is not taken for the perfect and whole observing of the law, but is restrained unto the second table and the offices of love. Therefore, it is not the universal righteousness whereby a man is judged just before God, but that honesty and innocency which respecteth men, when as that is given to every man which is his.

Therefore, the question remaineth as yet, whether works win the favour of God for us? which, that we may answer, we must first note that there is a double respect of God in loving men. For seeing we be born the children of wrath, (Ephes. ii. 3,) God shall be so far from finding any thing in us which is worthy of his love, that all our whole nature causeth him rather to hate us; in which respect, Paul saith that all men are enemies to him until they be reconciled by Christ, (Rom. v. 10.) Therefore, the first accepting of God, whereby he receiveth us into favour, is altogether free; for there can as yet no respect of works be had, seeing all

things are corrupt and wicked, and taste of [bespeak] their beginning. Now, whom God hath adopted to be his children, them doth he also regenerate by his Spirit, and reform in them his image: whence riseth that second respect. For God doth not find man bare and naked then, and void of all grace, but he knoweth his own work in him, yea, himself. Therefore, God accepteth the faithful, because they live godly and justly. And we do not deny that God accepteth the good works of the saints; but this is another question, whether man prevent the grace of God with his merits or no, and insinuate himself into his love, or whether he be beloved at the beginning, freely and without respect of works, forasmuch as he is worthy of nothing else but of hatred. Furthermore, forasmuch as man, left to his own nature, can bring nothing but matter of hatred, he must needs confess that he is truly beloved; whereupon, it followeth that God is to himself the cause that he loveth us, and that he is provoked [actuated] with his own mercy, and not with our merits. Secondly, we must note, that although the faithful please God after regeneration with good works, and their respects of works, yet that is not done with the merit of works. For the cleanliness of works is never so exact that they can please God without pardon; yea, forasmuch as they have always some corruption mixed with them, they are worthy to be refused. Therefore, the worthiness of the works doth not cause them to be had in estimation, but faith, which borroweth that of Christ which is wanting in works.

36. *Concerning the matter.* Because the Greek text is abrupt, some think that the accusative case is put instead of the nominative; and that the sense is this, This is the word which God hath sent unto the children of Israel. Other some refer it unto the word *ye know*, which followeth afterward; and they think that there was another word added to make the sentence more pleasant. For Luke putteth λογον in the former place, and afterward ρημα. But forasmuch as it is common and familiar amongst the Grecians to under-

stand[1] the prepositions; this sense, which I have set down, seemeth to me more agreeable, though, if the harshness of the speech can be any better mitigated, I will willingly yield. Therefore I take this member to be a preface, which appertaineth unto this worthy work of God, which he showed amongst the children of Israel, preaching peace by Christ. That done, there is added a narration. At length, in the conclusion of his speech, Peter showeth to what end Christ was sent into the world. Furthermore, he beginneth with this commemoration not without cause, That God sent his word unto the children of Israel. And *speech* is put for *thing* in the Hebrew phrase. The eternal covenant which God had made with that people was at that time famous. There was nothing more commonly known among the Jews than that there was a Redeemer promised in times past to the fathers, who should restore things which were decayed unto a flourishing and blessed estate. This did those also know who were familiarly conversant with the Jews. Therefore, to the end Peter may purchase greater credit, he saith that he will speak of no new or unknown thing, but of the restoring of the Church, which did depend upon the eternal covenant of God, and which was now manifestly showed, and almost in every man's mouth.

Preaching peace. Peter teacheth here what manner [of] rumour and thing that was which was spread abroad; to wit, such as that it did make peace. I take *peace* in this place for the reconciling of men and God, which, notwithstanding, hath in it the perfect[2] salvation of the Church. For, as horrible confusion, and, as it were, a huge lump,[3] do follow after that God is once estranged from us; so, so soon as his fatherly favour doth once appear, he gathereth his Church together, and true felicity ariseth. Therefore, this is Peter's meaning, that God showed himself merciful to his people in Christ, and that he received into favour

[1] "Subaudire," to supply. [2] "Solidam et perfectam," the perfect and entire. [3] "Tetrum chaos," a dire chaos.

Abraham's children again, (whom he seemed to have cast away for a time,) that he might establish among them a flourishing estate. And as he maketh God the author of this peace, so he placeth Christ in the midst as the pledge thereof, that it may be certain and holy. He coupleth peace and preaching expressly together, because this is one way whereby the fruit of the reconciliation, purchased by Christ, cometh unto us. In like sort, after that Paul had taught that Christ is our peace, he addeth immediately, that he came to preach peace unto those who were nigh at hand and far off, (Ephes. ii. 17.)

37. *Ye know how the word.* This sermon of Peter consisteth upon [of] two members principally; for in the former he reciteth an history; secondly, he descendeth unto the fruit of the history. For seeing that the coming of Christ into the world, his death and resurrection, are the matter of our salvation, Christ cannot otherwise be set before us to salvation, than if we first know that he hath put on our flesh; that he was in such sort conversant amongst men; that he proved himself, by certain testimonies, to be the Son of God; that he was at length nailed upon the cross, and raised up from the dead by the power of God. Again, lest the knowledge of the history be unprofitable and cold, we must also show the end why he came down from his heavenly glory into the world, why he suffered such a death so reproachful amongst men, and accursed by the mouth of God. The cause of his resurrection must be showed, whence the effect and fruit of all these things is gathered; to wit, that Christ was humbled, that he might restore us unto perfect blessedness who were quite lost; and also that he put on brotherly love together with our flesh; that by taking upon him our infirmities, he unburdened us thereof; that he made satisfaction for our sins, by the sacrifice of his death, that he might purchase the Father's favour for us; that when as he had gotten the victory of death, he purchased for us eternal life; that he set heaven open for us by his entrance into the same; that

all the power of the Spirit was poured out upon him, that he might enrich us with his abundance, (Isaiah lxi. 1.)

This order of teaching doth Peter observe when he beginneth with the history of the gospel; and afterward showeth what we have by Christ's descending into the earth, by his death and resurrection. First, he saith, that Jesus of Nazareth came abroad after John's baptism. For because John was appointed to this end, by the counsel of God, that he might lift up the minds of the people to wait for Christ, it was not meet that this point should be omitted. He was counted an excellent prophet of God; therefore his authority was of great importance to make Christ to be believed, especially amongst the ignorant and those which were but novices. We must note the phrase, that John preached baptism. For Luke comprehendeth, indeed, under the word *baptism*, all the whole ministry of John; nevertheless he showeth that it was no dumb sign, and void of doctrine. And assuredly this is the chiefest thing in all sacraments, that the Word of God may appear engraven there, and that the clear voice may sound. For which cause, that wicked profanation which is seen in Papistry is so much the more to be detested, because, burying preaching, they do only charm the sacraments with magical enchantment.

38. *Jesus of Nazareth.* He calleth him a Nazarite here, not because he was born there, but because he came thence to execute his office; again, because he was surnamed thus commonly. He saith that he was anointed with the Spirit and power by *hypallage*. For the power wherein Christ exceeded proceeded from the Spirit alone. Therefore, when as the heavenly Father anointed his Son, he furnished him with the power of his Spirit. Peter saith immediately after, that this power appeared in miracles; although he expresseth one kind only in plain words, that Christ testified that he was endowed with power of the Holy Ghost, that he might do good in the world. For it was not meet that the fearful power of God should be showed forth in him, but such as

might allure the world with the sweet taste of goodness and grace to love him and to desire him. The metaphor of anointing is usual so often as mention is made of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It is now applied unto the person of Christ, because by this means he was consecrated a king and priest by his Father. And we know that in time of the law, oil was a solemn token of consecration. The going of Christ is taken for the course of his calling, as if he should say, that he fulfilled his function until the time appointed before. The similitude is taken from travellers which go forward in their journey until they come unto the appointed place; although he showeth therewithal that he walked through Judea in three years, so that no corner was without his good deeds.

Those which were holden of devils. This also was a more manifest token of God's power in Christ, that he did not only heal men of common diseases, but did also cure desperate evils. All diseases are indeed light punishments[1] wherewith God doth punish us; but when as he dealeth more gently with us according to his fatherly kindness, he is said to strike us with his hand then; but in more grievous scourges he useth Satan as the minister of his wrath, and as it were an hangman. And we must diligently mark this distinction; for it were an absurd thing to say that he is tormented of the devil who is sick of an ague, or of some other common kind of disease; but the alienating of the mind,[2] furious madness, and other, as it were, monstrous griefs, [evils,] are fitly and properly attributed to Satan. And, in this respect, the Scripture useth to call men who are so taken and carried headlong with such madness that they have no hold of themselves, so that they seem to be turned almost into beasts, men possessed of devils.

Because God was with him. Peter noteth briefly to what end those powers did tend which were showed[3] by the hand of Christ, to wit, that he might purchase credit among men, who did behold God as it were present; and this was the

[1] "Totidem ferulæ," so many rods. [2] "Mentis alienatio," mental alienation. [3] "Editæ," exhibited, performed.

true use of miracles, as we have said already elsewhere, and as we shall see again hereafter when we come to it. For we must stay ourselves upon this principle, that we diminish the majesty of God unless we embrace and reverence those whom he marketh with the mark of his servants. Therefore, forasmuch as powers [miracles] did plainly prove that Christ descended from heaven, his dignity is placed without the lot of man's judgment.

39. *And we are witnesses of all things which he did in the country of the Jews, and at Jerusalem, whom they slew, hanging him on a tree.*
40. *Him God raised the third day, and showed him openly,*
41. *Not unto all the people, but to the witnesses appointed before of God for this purpose; namely, to us who did eat and drink with him after that he was risen from the dead:*
42. *And he commanded us that we should preach to the people, and should testify that he is appointed judge of the quick and dead.*
43. *To this man do all the prophets bear witness, that whosoever believeth in him may, through his name, receive remission of sins.*

39. *And we be witnesses.* That he may make his words to be believed, he saith, that he and his fellows in office saw with their eyes all those things which they spake concerning Christ.[1] Shortly after, he taketh the word *witness* in another sense, when he saith that they were appointed witnesses[2] by God,[3] and that they are brought forth, as it were, by God, that they might by their preaching bring men unto the faith of Christ. So Paul, in the fifteenth of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. xv. 15,) saith, "We (saith he) should be found false witnesses [of God,] unless Christ were risen from the dead." And we have already heard by the mouth

[1] "Ita loqui de rebus probe compertis," and so spake of things well ascertained, omitted. [2] "Certos testes," sure witnesses. [3] "Quo significat publicam apostolis impositam esse personam, utque ad hoc peculiariter delectos esse," by which he intimates that a public character was assigned to the apostles, and that for this they were specially chosen, omitted.

of Christ, "Ye shall be my witnesses in Judea, Samaria, and at Jerusalem." And now Peter calleth himself only an historical witness, because he beheld the things which were done. And here he toucheth his death briefly, because it was openly known; he standeth longer upon his resurrection, which was more doubtful, and the knowledge whereof was more available unto faith.

41. If any man demand here, Why God did not show his Son openly to all men after his resurrection? I answer, Although there could no reason be showed, yet ought the counsel of God alone to suffice sober and modest men, that they may assure themselves without all doubt that that is best which God hath thought meet. And yet, assuredly God used this moderation to a good end. For the certainty of the resurrection was proved by many and firm testimonies, and this was profitable to exercise the faith of the godly, to believe the gospel rather than their eyes. As touching the wicked and professed enemies of Christ, seeing that being so often convict they would never yield to God, they were unworthy to have Christ to admit them to behold the glory of his resurrection. Though even they were sufficiently convict with the report of the soldiers, whom they had hired to keep the sepulchre; that I may omit other reasons which we may fet out of the Harmony.[1] Therefore, let us assure ourselves of this, that the holy apostles were chosen by the holy decree of God, that by their testimony the truth of Christ's resurrection might stand. Whosoever is not content with this approbation, let him take away and overthrow if he can that inviolable decree of God, which Peter commendeth to us in this place. And as for us, if we covet to have God the sure author of our faith, let us learn to be content with the witnesses whom in due time he hath brought forth, as it were, by his hand, being ordained by him before the world was made.

[1] "Quas petere licebit ex Harmonia," which may be seen in my Harmony.

Who did eat. And here it appeareth what great regard Christ had of our rudeness and ignorance, who did abase himself so far for our sake, that when he was now endued with heavenly glory, he did yet, notwithstanding, eat and drink as a mortal man. Wherefore, there is no cause why we should complain that the resurrection of Christ is obscure and doubtful; for he suffered his disciples to be slow and hard of belief for this cause, that being better confirmed, they might take from us all occasion of doubting. Yea, rather, we must endeavour ourselves that our unworthiness and unthankfulness do not darken so great kindness of the Son of God toward us. But when as the Scripture saith, that Christ did eat, curious men move a question, what became of that meat? But the answer is easy; that like as it was created out of nothing, so was it easily brought to nothing by the divine power of Christ. That meat which is taken for the sustenance of the body is concocted and afterward digested; but we know that Christ took this meat to feed our faith, and in this use was it spent. And those men are deceived who think that Christ did only seem to eat. For what good could such a visor or vain show have done?[1] For when, as we say that Christ was not enforced with any necessity of his own to eat, but that he meant only to provide for those that were his, all occasion is cut off[2] from the frivolous inventions of men.

42. *And he commanded us.* He beginneth in this place to intreat of the kingdom of Christ, when he saith that Christ did rise again for this cause, that he may once judge the world. For by the same right are the government of heaven and earth, and the perpetual government of the Church, due to him. He saith that he shall be judge *of quick and dead;* because, when as the dead shall rise again, others also, who shall then remain alive, shall be changed in a

[1] "Nec video quorsum attineat ejusmodi subterfugia quærere," nor do I see the use of having recourse to subterfuges (futile explanations) of this kind. [2] "Ansa præcisa est," no handle is left for.

moment, as Paul teacheth in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52,) and in the First to the Thessalonians, and the fourth chapter, (1 Thess. iv. 17.) In the word *testify* there is great weight; because, as men are naturally inclined unto unbelief, the simple preaching of the gospel should not be so effectual, unless the Lord should establish it with strong protestations. And chiefly, every one of us doth feel in himself too much what a hard matter it is both to lift up our minds to hope for the coming of Christ, which are entangled in earthly snares, and also continually to keep them fixed in this meditation, seeing they cease not with their lightness to be carried hither and thither continually.

43. *To him bear all the prophets.* Luke toucheth and gathereth the sum of the sermon briefly, as we have said; therefore is he so short[1] in noting the fruit of the history. Let us know that the words uttered by Peter are not recited in this place; but that it is only declared of what things he intreated. And we must consider three things, That it is the proper office of Christ to reconcile men to God when their sins are done away; that we have remission of sins by faith; that this doctrine is not new or of late invented, but that it had all the prophets of God since the beginning of the world to bear witness of it.

As touching the first, if God be pleased and pacified by not imputing our sins, it appeareth hereby that he hateth and is displeased with all mankind,[2] until such time as they begin to please him by free pardon. Therefore we are all condemned of sin, which maketh us subject to the wrath of God, and bindeth us with the guiltiness of eternal death; and because we are destitute of righteousness in ourselves, we are taught to flee unto the mercy of God, as unto our only fortress. When as he saith that the faithful receive remission of sins, there is understood a hidden contrariety

[1] "Vel potius concisus," or rather concise, (abrupt,) omitted.

[2] "Totum humanum genus exosum illi esse et infensum," that the whole human race is hostile and hateful to him.

between them and God; for God must needs offer it of his own accord that the faithful may receive it. When as he saith that it is given by the name of Christ, his meaning is, that we return into God's favour by the benefit of Christ alone, because he hath once reconciled him to us by his death; or, as they say commonly, that we obtain forgiveness of sins by Christ's mediation, (and coming between,) and by none other means.

Satan could never blot out of the minds of men the feeling of their guiltiness, but that they were always careful to crave pardon at God's hands; but forasmuch as there was but one way and means to obtain pardon, miserable men, being deluded with the jugglings [impostures] of Satan, did invent to themselves wonderful labyrinths, in whose crooks and turns they wearied themselves in vain. This first error did first lead them away from the right way, because they essayed to deserve pardon, which is offered freely, and is received by faith alone. Afterward there were innumerable kinds of satisfactions [expiations] invented whereby they appeased God. The beginning thereof flowed indeed from the Word of God; but forasmuch as when God gave unto the fathers the sacrifices and rites of oblations, he shadowed Christ, blind and profane men, setting Christ aside, and following a vain shadow, did corrupt all that which was God's in sacrifices and satisfactions.[1] Wherefore, what sacrifices soever the Gentiles did use since the beginning of the world, and those which the Turks and Jews use at this day, may be set against Christ as things altogether contrary. The Papists are never a whit better, save only that they sprinkle their satisfactions with the blood of Christ; but they deal too disorderly therein,[2] because, being not content with Christ alone, they gather to themselves, on every side, a thousand manner of sacrifices or satisfactions. Therefore, whosoever desireth to have re-

[1] "Quicquid Dei erat in piaculis," every thing of an expiatory nature appointed by God. [2] "Sed in eo nimio sunt præposteri," but in this they are exceedingly preposterous.

mission of sins, let him not turn aside from Christ, even the least nail's breadth.

When as we hear, that we have remission of sins by believing, we must understand and know the force and nature of faith, as undoubtedly Peter intreated abundantly of this, [viz.] after what sort we must believe in Christ. And this is nothing else, but with the sincere affection of the mind to embrace him as he is set before us in the gospel; so that faith dependeth upon the promises. Yet Peter seemeth to deal amiss, because whereas we have two principal things by our Saviour Christ, he doth only make mention of the one of them; for he speaketh nothing of repentance and newness of life, which ought not to be omitted in the sum of the gospel.[1] But we may easily answer, That the regeneration of the Spirit is comprehended under faith, as it is an effect thereof. For we believe in Christ for this cause, partly that he may restore us unto the Father's favour by the free imputation of righteousness; partly that he may sanctify us by his Spirit. And we know that we are adopted by God to be his children upon this condition, that he may govern us by his Spirit. Therefore, it was sufficient for Peter to show how men, who were by nature estranged from God, do return into favour with him.

As touching the third member, we need not reckon up all places of the prophets, where they set before us Christ to be the mediator, who, by obtaining pardon for our sins, doth reconcile God to us; but this is their common order of teaching, and, as it were, their rule, to call back all the godly unto that covenant which God made with Abraham, putting the mediator between.[2] Furthermore, this point is very needful to be known, that the grace which was offered at length by Christ is the same which the law and the prophets, in times past, delivered unto the fathers to be hoped for. And surely it was of great force with Cor-

[1] "Quæ in evangelii summa prætermitti minime debuerat," which ought by no means to have been omitted in a summary of the gospel. [2] "Mediatore interposito," by the interposition of a Mediator.

nelius and such like, who did greatly reverence the law and prophets, that they might know that that was performed and accomplished in very deed in Christ which was testified in the oracles of the prophets. Therefore, to the end the ministers of the Church may agree with the prophets in their form of teaching, let them study by preaching to set forth Christ; let them continually testify that we must seek righteousness at his hands alone, which consisteth upon [of] free remission of sins. This is another manner of antiquity than that which is showed with great boasting of the Papists, whilst that they thrust in the rotten inventions[1] of their satisfactions into the place of Christ's blood.

44. *And as Peter yet spake these words, the Spirit came down upon all which heard the word.*
45. *And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also were poured out the gifts of the Holy Ghost.*
46. *For they heard them speak with tongues, and glorify God. Then Peter answered,*
47. *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Spirit as well as we?*
48. *And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*

44. *And as Peter yet spake.* God declareth now by a new miracle, that the doctrine of the gospel is common as well to the Gentiles as to the Jews. And this is an excellent seal of the calling of the Gentiles; because the Lord would never have vouchsafed to bestow upon the Gentiles the graces of his Spirit, unless it had been to declare that even they were adopted together into the society of the covenant. These gifts, mentioned by Luke, differ indeed from the grace of regeneration; and yet, undoubtedly, God did by this means seal both Peter's doctrine, and also their faith and godliness which heard him. He saith that they

[1] "Putida...figmenta," the foul figments.

were *all* endowed with the Spirit, like as we saw before, that they came all encouraged to learn and obey.

This visible sign representeth unto us, as it were in a table, what an effectual instrument of God's power the preaching of the gospel is; for he poured out his Spirit as Peter spake, to the end he might show that he sendeth not teachers to that end, that they may beat the air with the vain sound of their voice, but that he may work mightily by their voice, and may quicken the same by the power of his Spirit, to the salvation of the godly. Thus doth Paul put the Galatians (Gal. iii. 2.) in mind, that they received the Holy Ghost by the hearing of faith; and in another place he saith that he is the minister of the Spirit, and not of the letter, (2 Cor. iii. 6.) The gift of the tongues, and other such like things, are ceased long ago in the Church; but the spirit of understanding and of regeneration is of force, and shall always be of force, which the Lord coupleth with the external preaching of the gospel, that he may keep us in reverence of his word, and may prevent the deadly dotings, wherein brain-sick fellows enwrap themselves, whilst that, forsaking the word, they invent an erroneous and wandering spirit. But it doth not, nor shall not, always so fall out, that all those which hear the word with their outward ears, do or shall also receive the Spirit; and the ministers do seldom light upon such hearers as Peter had, who are willing, with one consent, to follow God. Yet he bringeth to pass that all the elect feel in themselves the consent of the external word, and of the secret power of the Spirit.

45. *The faithful were astonished.* He calleth them faithful who were as yet possessed with a wicked error. So the Lord doth not by and by wipe away all clouds of ignorance from his, and yet they do not darken the praise of faith before God, because he pardoneth errors and doth vouchsafe to favour it, as if it were pure and plain. And yet it is a wonder, that seeing they knew that Peter was sent of God, they would now be amazed, as at some strange and

new thing, because God giveth the grace of his Spirit to those to whom he would have Christ now preached; but the sudden change is the cause of this, because, whereas God until that day had separated the Gentiles from his people as strangers and aliens, he doth now favour them both alike, and lifteth them up into the like degree of honour. Although we be also taught by this example, how hard a matter it is for us to wind out ourselves out of our errors once conceived, especially when they are of any continuance.

46. *For they heard them.* He expresseth what gifts of the Spirit were poured out upon them, and therewithal he noteth the use; to wit, that they had variety of tongues given them, so that they did glorify God with many tongues. Also, it may be gathered out of this place, that the tongues were given them not only for necessity, seeing the gospel was to be preached to strangers and to men of another language, but also to be an ornament and worship to the gospel. But ambition did afterward corrupt this second use, forasmuch as many did translate that unto pomp and vain glory which they had received to set forth the dignity of the heavenly wisdom, as Paul doth sharply reprove this fault in the Corinthians. Therefore, no marvel if God took away that shortly after which he had given, and did not suffer the same to be corrupted with longer abuse.

47. *Peter answered.* Peter reasoneth from the thing to the sign; for, seeing that baptism is an addition or appurtenance of the spiritual grace, he which hath received the Spirit is also apt [fit] to receive baptism; and this is the (most) lawful order, that the minister admit those unto the receiving of the outward sign whom God hath testified to be his children by the mark and pledge of his Spirit; so that faith and doctrine are first. And whereas unlearned men infer thereupon that infants are not to be baptized, it is without all reason. I grant that those who are strangers from the Church must be taught before the sign of adop-

tion be given them; but I say, that the children of the faithful which are born in the Church are from their mother's womb of the household of the kingdom of God. Yea, the argument which they use preposterously against us do I turn back [retort] upon themselves; for, seeing that God hath adopted the children of the faithful before they be born, I conclude thereupon that they are not to be defrauded of the outward sign; otherwise men shall presume to take that from them which God hath granted them. As touching the manifest grace of the Spirit, there is no absurdity therein, if[1] it follow after baptism in them.

And as this testimony maketh nothing for maintenance of their error, so it doth strongly refute the error of the Papists, who tie the grace of the Spirit to the signs, and think that the same is fet [fetched] from heaven with enchantments,[2] as those witches did think that they did pull down the moon with their charms. But forasmuch as Luke saith that these had the Holy Ghost given them who were not as yet baptized, he showeth that the Spirit is not included in baptism. Lastly, we must note that the apostles were content with water alone when as they did baptize,[3] and would to God this plainness had been retained amongst their posterity, and that they had not gathered here and there divers trifles, whereof baptism is full in Popery. They think that the worthiness of baptism is adorned with oil, salt, spittle, wax-candles, whereas they are rather filthy pollutions which corrupt the pure and natural [genuine] institution of Christ.

48. *And he commanded them to be baptized.* It was not of necessity that baptism should be ministered by Peter's hand, as Paul doth likewise testify that he baptized few at Corinth, for other ministers might take this charge upon

[1] "Tempore," in point of time. [2] "Eamque exorcismis non secus elici putant e cœlo," and think it can only be brought down from heaven by exorcisms. [3] "Ad conferendum baptismum," in giving baptism.

them. Whereas he saith, in *the name of the Lord*, it must not be restrained unto the form, as we have said in the third chapter; but because Christ is the proper scope of baptism, therefore are we said to be baptized in his name. When as Luke saith, last of all, that Peter was requested by Cornelius and his kinsmen that he would tarry a few days, he commendeth in them their desire to profit. They were, indeed, endued with the Holy Ghost; but they were not so come to the top, but that confirmation was as yet profitable for them. And, according to their example, so often as opportunity to profit offereth itself, we must use it diligently; and let us not swell with pride, which stoppeth the way before doctrine.[1]

CHAPTER XI.

1. *And the apostles and brethren which were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had embraced the word of God.*
2. *And when Peter was gone up to Jerusalem, those which were of the circumcision reasoned with him,*
3. *Saying, Thou wentest in unto men uncircumcised, and hast eaten with them.*
4. *And Peter began, and expounded to them in order, saying,*
5. *I was in the city Joppa praying; and being in a trance, I saw a vision, to wit, A certain vessel coming down from heaven like a great sheet, tied by the four corners, which came even unto me:*
6. *Which, when I considered earnestly, I saw then four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and birds of the heaven.*
7. *And I heard a voice saying to me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.*

[1] "Qui ingressum obstruat doctrinæ," which obstructeth the entrance of doctrine.

8. *Then I said, Not so, Lord: Because there never entered into my mouth any common or unclean thing.*
9. *And the voice answered me the second time from heaven, Profane not thou those things which God hath made clean.*
10. *And this was done thrice: and they were all received into heaven again.*
11. *And, behold, the same hour three men stood nigh the house wherein I sat, being sent unto me from Cesarea.*
12. *And the Spirit commanded me to go with them, doubting nothing. And they came with me, and these six brethren, and we entered the man's house.*
13. *And he told us how he had seen an angel standing at his house, and saying to him, Send men to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter;*
14. *Who shall speak to thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.*
15. *Furthermore, when I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell down upon them, even as upon us at the beginning.*
16. *And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, John truly hath baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.*
17. *Therefore, seeing that God had given them the like gift as unto us, which was believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that could let* [hinder] *God?*
18. *When they had heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also given unto the Gentiles repentance unto life.*

1. *And the apostles.* Whereas Luke declareth that the fame of one house which was converted was spread abroad everywhere amongst the brethren, that did arise by reason of admiration; for the Jews accounted it as a monster that the Gentiles should be gathered unto them, as if they should have heard that there had been men made of stones. Again, the immoderate love of their nation did hinder them from acknowledging the work of God. For we see that through this ambition and pride the Church was troubled; because the equality which did diminish their dignity was not tolerable. For which cause they did contend stoutly to bring the necks of the Gentiles under the yoke. But forasmuch

as it was foretold by so many prophecies of the prophets, that the Church should be gathered of all people after the coming of the Messiah, and forasmuch as Christ had given commandment to his apostles touching the preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world, how can it be that the conversion of a few men should move some, as some strange thing, and should terrify other some, as if it were some monster? I answer, that whatsoever was foretold touching the calling of the Gentiles, it was so taken as if the Gentiles should be made subject to the law of Moses, that they might have a place in the Church. But the manner of the calling, the beginning whereof they saw then, was not only unknown, but it seemed to be quite contrary to reason. For they did dream that it was impossible that the Gentiles could be mixed with the sons of Abraham, and be made one body with them, (the ceremonies being taken away,) but that there should be great injury done to the covenant of God; for to what end served the law save only to be the mid wall to note out the disagreement? Secondly, because they were acquainted with that difference during their whole life, the unlooked-for newness of the thing doth so pierce them, that they did forget all that which ought to have quieted their minds. Finally, they do not straightway comprehend the mystery, which, as Paul teacheth, was unknown to the angels from the creation of the world.

2. *They reasoned with him.* Obstinacy doth for the most part accompany error. This was now a fault having in it too gross ignorance, in that they did not quietly receive the Gentiles into their bosom, united to them by the same Spirit of faith. But they do not only leap back, but also contend with Peter contentiously, and blame him for his fact, which deserved great praise. They hear that the Gentiles have embraced the Word of God; what letteth them then from embracing them, that they may be coupled together[1] under the government of one God? For what more holy

[1] "Societatem colant," may cultivate communion.

bond can there be, than when all men, with one consent, are coupled and joined to God? And why should not those grow together into one body who make the Messiah of God their head? But because they saw the external form of the law broken, they thought that heaven and earth did go together.[1]

And note, that although Luke said before that the apostles and brethren had heard this fame, yet he spake nothing of offence; but he bringeth in now, as it were, a new sect of men, which did contend with Peter. The brethren, saith he, *heard*, and there an end; it followeth, *When Peter was come to Jerusalem, those which were of the circumcision did contend with him*, who were undoubtedly unlike to the first; again, these words περιτομης, do not simply signify the Jews, but those who were too much addicted to keeping the ceremonies of the law. For there were none of Jerusalem in Christ's flock at that time, save only those which were circumcised. From whom, then, could he distinguish those men? Lastly, it seemeth to be a thing unlike to be true that the apostles, and those which were moderate being of the number of the faithful, did attempt this combat. For though they had been offended, yet they might have conferred with Peter privately, and have demanded some reason of his fact. By these reasons am I moved to think that those are said to be of the circumcision who did make so great account of circumcision, that they granted no man a place in the kingdom of God, unless he took upon him the profession of the law, and, being admitted into the Church by this holy rite, did put off uncleanness.

3. *Unto men being uncircumcised.* This was not forbidden by the law of God, but it was a tradition which came from the fathers. And yet, notwithstanding, Peter doth not object that they dealt too hardly[2] with him in this point, and that he was not bound by the necessity of man's law. He omitteth all this defence, and doth only answer, that they

[1] "Misceri," were confounded. [2] "Præcise," strictly.

came first unto him, and that they were offered unto him, as it were, by the hand of God. And here we see the rare modesty of Peter, because whereas, trusting to the goodness of the cause, he might have justly despised unskilful men, who did trouble him unjustly, yet doth he mildly excuse himself as it becometh brethren. This was no small trial in that he was unworthily accused, because he had obeyed God faithfully. But because he knew that this law was enjoined the whole Church, that every man be ready to give an account of his doctrine and life so often as the matter requireth, and he remembered that he was one of the flock, he doth not only suffer himself to be ruled, but submitteth himself willingly to the judgment of the Church. Doctrine, indeed, if it be of God, is placed above the chance and die of man's judgment; but because the Lord will have prophecy judged, his servants must not refuse this condition, that they prove themselves to be such as they will be accounted. But we shall see anon how far the defence both of doctrine, as also of facts, ought to extend.

For this present we must know this, that Peter doth willingly answer for himself when his fact is reproved.[1] And if the Pope of Rome be Peter's successor, why is not he bound by the same law? Admit we grant that this submission was voluntary, yet why doth not the successor imitate such an example of modesty showed unto him? Although we need no long circumstance[2] here; for if that be true which the Popes spew out in their sacrilegious decrees, Peter did treacherously betray and forsake the privileges of their seat, [See,] and so he betrayed the See of Rome. For, after that they have made the Pope the judge of all the whole world, affirming that he is not subject to man's judgment; after that they have lifted him up above the clouds, that, being free from giving an account, his will and pleasure may stand for a reason, [law,] they make him forthwith patron of the apostolic seat, [See,] stoutly to defend the privileges thereof.

[1] "Petrum ad causam dicendam libenter descendere quum ejus factum improbatur," that Peter readily condescends to plead his cause when his act is impugned. [2] "Circuitu," circumlocution.

Of what great sluggishness shall Peter then be condemned, if he did lose his right given him of God, by yielding so cowardly? [easily.] Why did not he at least object that he was free from the laws, and exempt from the common sort? But he useth no such preface, but entereth [on] the cause without making any delay. And let us remember, that there is nothing which hindereth us from contemning that idol safely, seeing that usurping such unbridled tyranny, he hath blotted himself out of the number of the bishops.

And Peter beginning. Because this narration is all one with [that] which we had in the chapter next (going before,) and because it is repeated almost in the very same words, if any thing need to be expounded let the readers repair thither. The purpose of Peter, and all the whole sum of his speech, shall appear by the conclusion. Yet, before I come thither, we must briefly mark that he maketh the preaching of the gospel the cause of salvation. *Thou shalt hear* (saith he) *words wherein thou mayest have salvation*, not because salvation is included in man's voice, but because God, offering his Son there unto eternal life, doth also cause us to enjoy him by faith. This is assuredly wonderful goodness of God, who maketh men ministers of life, who have nothing but matter of death in themselves, and which are not only subject to death in themselves, but are also deadly to others. Nevertheless, the filthy unthankfulness of the world betrayeth itself in this point, which, loathing true and certain salvation offered unto it, and forsaking it when it lieth at the feet, doth imagine divers and vain salvations, in seeking which, it had rather gape being hungry,[1] than to be filled with the grace of God which meeteth it and is present.

16. *I remembered the word of the Lord.* We have sufficiently declared in the first chapter, that when Christ uttered that sentence, he did not make a comparison between two baptisms; but that he intended to declare what difference there was between him and John, (Acts i. 5.) For, as we

[1] "Famelicus inhiare mavult," it prefers gaping famished.

distinguish the sign from his [its] truth, so it is good to distinguish the minister from the author, lest mortal man challenge[1] that which is proper to God. Man hath the sign in his hand; it is Christ alone which watereth and regenerateth. For it skilleth much whither men's minds be directed in seeking the graces of God, because they shall not receive one drop without Christ. Therefore, there is this general difference between Christ and all the ministers of the Church, because they give the external sign of water, but he fulfilleth and performeth the effect of the sign by the power of his Spirit. The readers were to be admonished of this thing again in this place, because many do falsely infer that John's baptism and ours are not all one, whilst that Christ, challenging to himself the Spirit, doth leave nothing for John save water alone.

But if any man trusting to this testimony do make baptism a cold spectacle, and void of all grace of the Spirit, he shall be also greatly deceived. For the Holy Scripture useth to speak two manner of ways of the sacraments. For because Christ is not unfaithful in his promises, he doth not suffer that to be vain which he doth institute; but when as the Scripture doth attribute to baptism strength to wash and regenerate, it ascribeth all this to Christ, and doth only teach what he worketh by his Spirit by the hand of man and the visible sign. Where Christ is thus joined with the minister, and the efficacy of the Spirit with the sign, there is so much attributed to the sacraments as is needful, (Titus iii. 5;) but that conjunction must not be so confused, but that men's minds, being drawn from mortal and frail things, and things like to themselves, and from the elements of the world, they must learn to seek for salvation at Christ's hand, and to look unto the power of his Spirit alone; because he misseth the mark of faith, whosoever turneth aside even but a little from the Spirit unto the signs; and he is a sacrilegious person who taketh even but an inch of Christ's praise, that he may deck man therewith. And we must also remember, that Christ did comprehend under the word *Spirit*, not only the

[1] "Ad se trahat," arrogate to himself.

gift of tongues, and such like things, but all the whole grace of our renewing; but because these gifts were an excellent argument of Christ's power, this sentence may well be applied unto them. I will make this more plain; seeing that Christ did bestow upon the apostles the visible graces of the Spirit, he did plainly declare that the Spirit was in his hand; so that by this means he did testify, that he is the alone author of cleanness, righteousness, and of the whole regeneration. And Peter applieth it unto his purpose thus, that forasmuch as Christ did go before, carrying with him the force of baptism, it became him to follow with the addition,[1] that is, the outward sign of water.

17. *Who was I?* Now do we see to what end Peter made that narration; to wit, that he might declare that God was the author and governor of all the whole matter; therefore, the state of the question consisteth in [turneth upon] the authority of God, whether meat be not of more weight than men's counsels.[2] Peter affirmeth that he did nothing but that which was rightly and orderly done, because he obeyed God; he showeth that he preached the doctrine of the gospel, neither amiss, neither rashly, where Christ bestowed the graces of his Spirit. The approbation of our doctrine, and also our deeds, must be brought to this rule so often as men call us to an account; for whosoever stayeth himself upon the commandment of God, he hath defence enough. If men be not content, there is no cause why he should pass for their judgments any more.[3] And hereby we gather that the faithful ministers of God's word may in such sort give an account of their doctrine, that they may no whit impair the credit and certainty thereof; to wit, if they show that it was given them by God: but if they shall deal with unjust men, who will not be enforced with the reverence of God to

[1] "Cum accessione," with the accessary. [2] "Annon præponderet cibus humanis consiliis," whether meat do not preponderate in man's counsels. [3] "Non est quod perversa eorum judicia amplius moretur," there is no reason why he should any longer regard their perverse judgments.

yield, let us let them alone with their obstinacy, appealing unto the day of the Lord.

And we must also note, that we do not only resist God by striving against him, but also by lingering, if we do not that which our calling requireth, and which is proper to it. For Peter saith that he cannot deny baptism and brotherly fellowship to the Gentiles, but that he should be [without being] an enemy to God. But he should have essayed nothing which was manifestly contrary to the grace of God. That is true indeed; but he which doth not receive those whom God offereth, and shutteth the gate which God openeth, he hindereth the work of God so much as in him lieth; as we say at this day, that those men make war against God who are set against the baptizing of infants; because they most cruelly exclude those out of the Church whom God hath adopted into the Church, and they deprive those of the outward sign whom God vouchsafeth to call his children. Like unto this is that kind of resisting, in that many dissemblers, who, whilst they be magistrates, ought to assist, according to their office, the martyrs of Christ, go about to stop their mouths, and to take from them their liberty. For because they hate the truth, they would have it suppressed.

18. *When they heard these things they were quieted.* The end doth show that those were not moved with malice which did contend with Peter; for this is an evident sign of godliness, in that being thoroughly instructed touching the will of God, they cease forthwith to contend. By which example we are taught, that those are not to be despised who, being offended through unadvised zeal, reprove any thing wrongfully; but that their consciences must be appeased by the Word of God, which are troubled by error, and that their docility is tried at least thus far forth. As touching us, we do hereby, in like sort, learn whereupon our judgment must depend, namely, upon the sole and simple beck of God. For this honour is due to him, that his will be to us the certain and principal rule of truth and justice. So often as it

is requisite for us to know the cause of any thing, the Lord doth not conceal the same from us; but to the end he may accustom our faith unto just obedience, he telleth us sometimes simply and plainly that this or that thing pleaseth him. He which granteth liberty to himself to inquire farther, and taketh a delight in his curiosity, doth nothing else but throw himself headlong with devilish boldness. And Luke doth not only declare that these men held their peace, but that they gave glory also to God. Some are enforced by shame to hold their peace, who, notwithstanding, keep in that in their minds which they dare not utter. That is rather a dissemblance of modesty than docility. But these men do so thoroughly submit themselves to God, that they are not afraid nor ashamed to recant by and by, [forthwith.]

Then hath God. Luke doth briefly declare in these words what the gospel containeth, and to what end it tendeth, to wit, that God may reconcile men to himself, being renewed by his Spirit. The word *repentance* alone is expressed in this place, but when he addeth *unto life*, it appeareth plainly that it is not separated from faith. Therefore, whosoever will rightly profit in the gospel, let him put off the old man, and think upon newness of life, (Eph. iv. 22;) that done, let him know for a certainty that he is not called in vain unto repentance, but that there is salvation prepared for him in Christ. So shall it come to pass, that the hope and assurance of salvation shall rest upon the free mercy of God alone, and that the forgiveness of sins shall, notwithstanding, be no cause of sluggish security. This member, to *give repentance*, may be expounded two manner of ways; either that God granted to the Gentiles place for repentance, when as he would have his gospel preached to them; or that he circumcised their hearts by his Spirit, as Moses saith, (Deut. xxx. 6,) and made them fleshy hearts of stony hearts, as saith Ezekiel, (Ezek. xi. 19.) For it is a work proper to God alone to fashion and to beget men again, that they may begin to be new creatures; and it agreeth better with this second sense; it is not so much racked, and it agreeth better with the phrase [phraseology] of Scripture.

19. *Those, therefore, which were dispersed by reason of the tribulation which happened about Stephen, went into Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to the Jews.*
20. *And there were certain of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, entering into Antioch, spake with the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.*
21. *And the hand of the Lord was with them: Therefore a great number, when they believed, were turned unto the Lord.*
22. *And the tidings of them came unto the ears of the Church which was at Jerusalem: and they sent Barnabas, that he might go to Antioch.*
23. *Who, when he was come, and* [had] *seen the grace of God, he rejoiced, and did exhort all, that with purpose of heart they would continue cleaving to the Lord.*
24. *Because he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith. And there was a great multitude added unto the Lord.*

19. *Those which were scattered abroad.* Luke returneth now unto the former history, (and unto that which followed in the same.) For he had said before, that after that Stephen was slain the cruelty of the wicked increased; and many fled hither and thither for fear, so that the apostles were almost left alone at Jerusalem. Whereas the Church was thus torn in pieces, and fear did cause those which were fled to keep silence, or else contempt of strangers,[1] he declareth that that event did follow which no man would have hoped for; for as the seed is sown that it may bring forth fruit, so it came to pass through their flight and scattering abroad, that the gospel was spread abroad in nations which were far off, which was included before within the walls of one city, as in a barn.[2] In like sort it came to pass, that the name of Christ, passing over mountains and seas, did flow even unto the farthest parts of the world; and by this means, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, the consumption

[1] Transpose thus: "And fear, or else contempt of strangers, did cause those who had fled to keep silence." [2] Transpose thus: "The gospel which was before included, &c., was spread abroad," &c.

did abound[1] in righteousness. If so many godly men had not been expelled out of Jerusalem, Cyprus had heard nothing, Phenice had heard nothing of Christ; yea, Italy and Spain, which were farther off, had heard nothing. But the Lord brought to pass, that of many torn members did arise more bodies. For how came it to pass that there were Churches gathered at Rome and at Puteoli, save only because a few exiled men, and such as fled away,[2] had brought the gospel thither with them? And as God did at that time make the endeavours of Satan frustrate after a wonderful sort, so we need not doubt but that even at this day he will make to himself triumphs of the cross and persecution, that the Church may better grow together, though it be scattered abroad. Phenice joineth to Syria, and is nigh to Galilee. Antioch is a most famous city of Syria, at which part it is joined to Cilicia.

Speaking to none. Peradventure they were letted not only with fear of persecution, that they durst not speak to the Gentiles, but also with that foolish religion, in that they thought that the children's bread was thrown to the dogs, (Mark xvi. 15;) whereas, notwithstanding, Christ had commanded that the gospel should be preached to all the world after his resurrection.

20. Luke doth at length declare that certain of them brought this treasure even unto the Gentiles. And Luke calleth these Grecians not Ἕλληνες, but Ἑλληνιστάι. Therefore, some say that those came of the Jews, yet did they inhabit Greece; which I do not allow. For seeing the Jews, whom he mentioned a little before, were partly of Cyprus, they must needs be reckoned in that number, because the Jews count Cyprus a part of Greece. But Luke distinguisheth them from those, whom he calleth afterward Ἑλληνιστάς. Furthermore, forasmuch as he had said that the word was preached at the beginning only to the Jews, and he meant

[1] "Consumptio exundavit," the devastation overflowed.

[2] "Pauci exules ac profugi," a few exiles and fugitives.

those who, being banished out of their own country, did live in Cyprus and Phenice, correcting as it were this exception, he saith that some of them did teach the Grecians. This contrariety doth cause me to expound it of the Gentiles. For Luke's meaning is, that a few did more freely preach the gospel,[1] because the calling of the Gentiles was not unknown to them. But the constancy of them all deserveth no small praise; because, being delivered, as it were, out of the midst of death, they are not afraid to do their duty toward God even with danger. Whence we gather to what end, and how far forth Christians may fly persecution; to wit, that they may spend[2] the residue of their life in spreading abroad the glory of God. If any man demand how it came to pass that strangers lately coming, and such as might have been suspected among all the Jews, and hated of them, because they were banished out of Jerusalem, were so bold, I answer, that this came to pass through the singular motion of God, and that they consulted suddenly according to the occasion offered them. For this deliberation is not of flesh and blood.

21. *The hand of the Lord was.* Luke proveth by the success that the gospel was offered unto the Gentiles also by the brethren of Cyprus and Cyrene not rashly nor unadvisedly, because their labour was fruitful and profitable. But such increase should never have followed, unless God had commanded and favoured. Therefore, it followeth that it pleased God that the Gentiles should be called. The *hand*, as it is well known, doth signify power and strength. Therefore, this is Luke's meaning, that God did testify by his present aid that the Gentiles were called together with the Jews, through his direction, to be made partakers of the grace of Christ. And this blessing of God served not a little to confirm the minds of all men. This place did also teach us, that what pains soever the ministers of God take

[1] "Evangelii doctrinam sparsisse," did spread the doctrine of the gospel.
[2] "Strenue impendant," may strenuously spend.

in teaching, it shall be all vain and void, unless God bless their labours from heaven. For we may plant and water, as Paul teacheth, but the increase cometh from God alone, (1 Cor. iii.,) in whose hand the hearts of men are, that he may bend and frame the same at his pleasure. Therefore, as often as we are to intreat of faith, let us always remember this speech, that God wrought by his ministers, and that he made their doctrine effectual by his hand, that is, by the secret inspiration of the Spirit. Therefore, let the minister attempt nothing trusting to his own wit and industry, but let him commit his labour to the Lord, upon whose grace the whole success dependeth; and where doctrine shall work effectually, let those which shall believe thank God for their faith. Furthermore, we must note that which Luke saith, that many were turned unto God by faith, because he doth very well express the force and nature of faith; that it is not idle and cold,[1] but such as restoreth men (who were before turned away from God) unto his government, and bindeth them unto his righteousness.

22. *And the tidings.* If this report had been brought before Peter did excuse himself, those good men should have been reproved of many whose ministry notwithstanding God had sealed with the grace of his Spirit; but that superstition was now wiped away out of their minds, forasmuch as God had by evident signs declared that no nation ought to be counted profane. Therefore, they contend no longer, neither do they count it a point of rashness, that some durst preach Christ unto the Gentiles; but by sending help, they testify that they allow that which they had done. Furthermore, this was the cause why they sent Barnabas. The apostles did at that time bear all the burden of the kingdom of Christ; therefore, it was their duty to frame and set in order Churches every where; to keep all the faithful, wheresoever dispersed, in the pure consent of faith; to appoint ministers and pastors wheresoever there was any number of

[1] "Otiosa frigidaque notitia," an idle and frigid knowledge.

the faithful. The crafty wiliness of Satan is well known. So soon as he seeth a gate set open for the gospel, he endeavoureth by all means to corrupt that which is sincere, [pure;] whereby it came to pass that divers heresies brake out together with Christ's doctrine. Therefore, the greater gifts every Church hath, the more careful ought it to be, lest Satan mix or trouble any thing amongst the ignorant, and those who are not as yet established in the right faith; because it is the easiest matter in the world to corrupt corn in the blade. To conclude, Barnabas was sent to bring them farther forward in the principles of faith; to set things in some certain order; to give the building which was begun some form, that there might be a lawful state of the Church.

23. *When he had seen the grace of God.* By these words Luke teacheth, first, that the gospel which they had received was true; secondly, that Barnabas sought nothing else but the glory of Christ. For, when he saith that he saw the grace of God, and that he exhorted them to go forward, hereby we gather that they were well taught. And the joy is a testimony of sincere godliness. Ambition is evermore envious and malicious; so that we see many seek for praise by reproving other men, because they are more desirous of their own glory than of the glory of Christ. But the faithful servants of Christ must rejoice (as did Barnabas) when they see the gospel increase, by whomsoever God shall make his name known. And assuredly those which help one another, so that they acknowledge that all the effect which springeth thence is the work of God, will never envy one another, neither will they seek to carp [at] one another, but will, with one mouth and mind, praise the power of God.

Again, this is worth the noting, that Luke doth attribute the faith of the men of Antioch, and whatsoever was worthy [of] praise there, to the grace of God. He might have reckoned up all those virtues which might make for the commendation of men; but he comprehendeth what ex-

cellence soever was in that Church under this word *grace*. Lastly, we must note Barnabas' exhortation. We have already said that Barnabas did subscribe to the former doctrine which they had embraced; but lest doctrine fall away, it is most requisite that it be thoroughly imprinted in the minds of the faithful by continual exhortations. For seeing that we have to encounter continually with so many and such strong adversaries, and our minds are so slippery, unless every man arm himself diligently, it will by and by fall away, which thing infinite numbers do show to be true by their falling away. Whereas he setteth down this manner of perseverance, that they continue with purpose of heart, we are hereby taught that faith hath taken deep root then when it hath a place in the heart. Wherefore it is no marvel, if scarce one of ten of those who profess faith do stand unto the end, seeing that very few know what the affection and purpose of heart meaneth.

24. *For he was a good man.* Barnabas is commended with the commendation of the Holy Ghost; yet we must know that there was respect had not so much of him as of us. For all those are condemned of ungodliness and malice who envy other men's labours, and are grieved when they see the same have good success.

Also we must note the epithet used in the description of a *good man, full of the Holy Ghost, full of faith.* For after that he had said that he was an upright and good man, he showed from what fountain this goodness did flow; that, abandoning the affections of the flesh, he did, with all his heart, embrace godliness, having the Spirit to be his guide. But why doth he separate faith from the Spirit, whose gift it is? I answer, that it is not named severally, as if it were a diverse thing, but it is rather set forth as a principal token, whereby it might appear that Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost.

There was a great multitude added. Though the number of the godly was already great, yet Luke saith that it was increased by Barnabas' coming. Thus doth the building

of the Church go forward when one doth help another with mutual consent, and one doth gently allow[1] that which another hath begun.

25. *And Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Saul:*
26. *And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it happened that they lived a whole year in the church, and did teach a great multitude; so that at Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*

25. Barnabas' simplicity is commended to us now the second time, that whereas he might have borne the chiefest swing at Antioch, yet went he into Cilicia that he might fet [fetch] Paul thence, who he knew should be preferred before him. Therefore we see how, forgetting himself, he respecteth nothing but that Christ may be chief; how he setteth before his eyes the edifying of the Church alone; how he is content with the prosperous success of the gospel. Therefore, Barnabas is no whit afraid lest Paul do any whit debase him by his coming, so he glorify Christ.

26. He addeth afterward, that such a holy concord was blessed from heaven; for this was no small honour that the holy name of Christians began there for all the whole world. Though the apostles had been long time at Jerusalem, yet God had not vouchsafed to bestow upon his Church, which was there, this excellent title of his Son. Whether it were because at Antioch much people was grown together into one body, as well of Jews as of Gentiles, or whether it were because the Church might be better ordered in time of peace; or because they were more bold to confess their faith, there were in very deed Christians both at Jerusalem and also in Samaria before that time; and we know that Jerusalem was the first

[1] "Candide...probat," candidly approves.

fountain from which Christianity did flow.[1] And what is it else to be a disciple of Christ but to be a Christian? But when they began plainly to be called that which they were, the use of the name served greatly to set forth the glory of Christ, because by this means they referred all their religion unto Christ alone. This was, therefore, a most excellent worship for the city of Antioch, that Christ brought forth his name thence like a standard, whereby it might be made known to all the world that there was some people whose captain was Christ, and which did glory in his name.

But and if Rome had such a colour of [pretext for] pride, who were able to suffer the proud boastings of the Pope and his adherents? They would then, not without cause, thunder out that Rome is the mother and head of all Churches; but it is well, that seeing they challenge to themselves whatsoever, when they come to the matter, they are found altogether vain; yea, Antioch itself doth plainly prove, that the estate of one place is not continual. Admit we grant the Romans these plausible titles, *we have been sometimes*, [*we once were,*] shall they yet be so bold as to take one-half of that which belongeth to Antioch? And is the dignity of Antioch the greater now, because the Christians had their name thence? Yea, it is rather a manifest mirror of the horrible vengeance of God. For, seeing there is nothing to be seen there but evil favoured wastiness,[2] it remaineth that we learn to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and that we know that unthankful men have not so much liberty granted them that they may freely mock God.

27. *In those days came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch.*
28. *And one of them, named Agabus, arose, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be a great famine throughout the whole world, which happened under Claudius Cesar.*

[1] "Verum fuisse fontem ex quo primum fluxit Christianismus," was the true fountain from which Christianity did first flow [2] "Deformem vastitatem," hideous devastation.

29. *And as every one of the disciples was able, they decreed every man to send succour to the brethren which dwelt in Judea.*

30. *Which thing they did, sending it unto the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

27. Luke commendeth in this place the faith of the men of Antioch by the fruit, because they endeavoured to relieve the poverty of that church, from whence they received the gospel, with their abundance; and that did they unrequested. Such earnest care for the brethren doth sufficiently declare how seriously they worshipped Christ, the head of all. Luke doth signify that the fame of that church was spread abroad, when he saith that there came excellent men thither from Jerusalem. But forasmuch as the word *prophet* is taken divers ways in the New Testament, as we may learn by the former Epistle to the Corinthians, those are called prophets in this place who were endued with the gift of prophesying, as the four daughters of Philip shall have the same title given them hereafter. And forasmuch as the foretelling of the famine is attributed to Agabus alone, we may hereby gather that this was granted to every one by a certain measure to know things to come.

28. *He signified by the Spirit.* Luke doth plainly express that the Spirit of God was the author of this prophecy, that we may know that it was not a conjecture taken by the stars, or some other natural causes; again, that Agabus did not play the philosopher after the manner of men, but he uttered that which God had appointed by the secret inspiration of the Spirit. Barrenness may indeed be sometimes foretold by the disposition of the stars, but there is no certainty in such foretellings, both because of the opposite concourses, and also, especially, because God doth govern earthly things at his pleasure, far otherwise than can be gathered by the stars, that he may lead men away from the perverse beholding of stars. And although these foretellings have their degree, yet the prophecies of the Spirit do far ex-

ceed them. But it seemeth that the foretelling of the famine was unlucky, [of evil omen,] and not to be wished for; for to what end was it for men to be made miserable before their time, by having the unhappy event foretold? I answer, that there be many causes for which it is expedient that men should be warned before in time when the judgments of God hang over their heads, and punishments [are] due to their sins. I omit others which are usual[1] in the prophets, because [viz. that] they have a space granted wherein to repent, that they may prevent God's judgment, who have provoked his wrath against themselves; because [that] the faithful are instructed in time to arm themselves with patience; because [that] the obstinate wickedness of wicked men is convict; because [that] both good and evil learn that miseries do not come by chance, but that they are punishments wherewith God doth punish the sins of the world; because [that] those are awakened out of their sleep and sluggishness by this means, who took great delight in their vices. The profit of this present prophecy appeareth by the text, because the men of Antioch were thereby pricked forward to relieve their brethren which were in misery.

Which happened under Claudius. Suetonius also maketh mention of this famine, who saith that there were crusts or shards thrown at Claudius' head in the midst of the market, and that he was so sore afraid of stoning, that he had a singular care afterward, during his whole life, to make provision for victual. And Josephus, in his Fifteenth Book of Antiquity, saith, that Judea was sore oppressed with scarcity, by reason of continual drought.

29. But here ariseth a question, seeing that the misery was common to all, why ought they rather to have succoured one people than all the rest? I answer, that forasmuch as Judea was impoverished with great destructions of wars and other miseries, the men of Antioch were not without

[1] "Passim occurrunt," everywhere occur, are everywhere mentioned.

cause more moved with the miseries of the brethren which were there; secondly, the greater the rage of the enemies was, the more wretched was the estate of the brethren. Finally, Paul doth sufficiently declare in the Epistle to the Galatians, that Judea had certain especial necessities, whereof all other had regard, not without cause, (Gal. iii.) And this thankfulness deserved no small commendations, in that the men of Antioch thought that they ought to help the needy brethren, from whom they had received the gospel. For there is nothing more just than that those should reap earthly things who have sown spiritual things. As every man is too much bent to provide for himself, every man might readily have excepted and objected: Why shall not I rather provide for myself? But when they call to mind how greatly they are indebted to the brethren, omitting that carefulness,[1] they turn themselves to help them. In sum, this alms had a double end; for the men of Antioch did the duty of charity toward their needy brethren, and they did also testify by this sign, what great account they made of the gospel, whilst that they honoured the place whence it came.

As every man was able. We see the men of Antioch observe in this place that mean which Paul prescribeth to the Corinthians, (2 Cor. viii. 6,) whether they did this of themselves, or being instructed by him; and it is not to be doubted, but that he continued like to himself[2] in both places. Therefore we must follow this rule, that every one, considering how much is granted him, impart the same courteously with his brethren, as one that must give an account; so shall it come to pass, that he which is but poor shall have a liberal mind, and that a small reward[3] shall be counted a fat and gorgeous sacrifice. By this word *determined*, Luke giveth us to understand that their oblation was voluntary. Which thing ought so to be, as Paul teacheth, that we reach out our hand unto

[1] "Immodica illa anxietate," that excessive anxiety. [2] "Sibi constiterit," is consistent with himself. [3] "Munus," gift.

the needy not as constrained, but cheerfully, (2 Cor. ix. 7.) When as he nameth every one, it is all one as if he should say, that one did not prescribe another a law, neither did they burthen one another with their prejudice, but that every man did bestow his liberality as seemed good to himself; and we must note the word διακονιας, whereby we are taught that rich men have greater abundance given them upon that condition, that they may be the ministers of the poor in the dispensation committed to them by God. Lastly, Luke teacheth that the blessing was sent not to all the whole nation, but only to those that were of the household of faith, not because we ought never to use any bountifulness or courtesy towards the unbelievers, seeing love ought to extend itself unto all mankind, but because those ought to be preferred whom God hath joined and linked to us more near, and with a more holy band.

30. *Sending it unto the elders,* [presbyters.] We must note two things in this place, that the men of Antioch did choose faithful men, and of known honesty, to carry their blessing; secondly, that they sent it unto the elders, that they might wisely bestow the same. For if alms be thrown into the midst of the common people, or be set in the midst where every one may take what he will, every man will by and by take it to himself as if it were some common prey; and so he that is most bold will defraud the needy; yea, through his greediness he will cut the throats of the hungry. Therefore, let us mark these places, which teach that we must not only deal uprightly and faithfully, but that there is also an order and wisdom required as well in making choice as in all our administration. Those are called elders in whose hands the government of the Church was, among whom the apostles were chief; the men of Antioch refer the holy money (which they had appointed for the poor) to their discretion. If any man object that this was the office of the deacons, forasmuch as the apostles did deny that they could both serve tables and attend upon doctrine,

the answer is easy, that the deacons were appointed over tables, in such sort, that yet, notwithstanding, they were under the elders, [presbyters,] neither did they any thing but at their appointment.

CHAPTER XII.

1. *About that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to afflict certain of the Church.*
2. *And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*
3. *And when he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to take Peter also. (Then were the days of sweet* [unleavened] *bread.)*
4. *When he had taken him also, he put him in prison, delivering him to four quaternions of soldiers to be kept; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.*
5. *Therefore, Peter was kept in prison; but continual prayer was made for him of the Church of* [to] *God.*

1. Here followeth new persecution raised by Herod. We see that the Church had some short truce, that it might, as it were, by a short breathing, recover some courage against the time to come, and that it might then fight afresh. So at this day there is no cause why the faithful, having borne the brunts of one or two conflicts, should promise themselves rest,[1] or should desire such a calling[2] as old overworn soldiers use to have. Let this suffice them if the Lord grant them some time wherein they may recover their strength. This Herod was Agrippa the greater, [elder,] the son of Aristobulus, whom his father slew. Josephus doth no where call him Herod, it may be, because he had a

[1] "Perpetuam . . . quietem," perpetual rest, discharge.

[2] "Vacationem,"

brother who was king of Chalcis, whose name was Herod. This man was incensed to afflict the Church not so much for any love he had to religion, as that by this means he might flatter the common people, which did otherwise not greatly favour him; or rather, he was moved hereunto with tyrannical cruelty, because he was afraid of innovation, which tyrants do always fear, lest it trouble the quiet estate of their dominion. Yet it is likely that he did shed innocent blood, that, according to the common craft of kings, he might gratify a furious people; because St Luke will shortly after declare that Peter the apostle was put into prison that he might be a pleasant spectacle.

He killed James. Undoubtedly the cruelty of this mad man was restrained and bridled by the secret power of God. For assuredly he would never have been content with one or two murders, and so have abstained from persecuting the rest, but he would rather have piled up martyrs upon heaps, unless God had set his hand against him, and defended his flock. So when we see that the enemies of godliness, being full of fury, do not commit horrible slaughters, that they may mix and imbrue all things with blood, let us know that we need not thank their moderation and clemency for this; but because, when the Lord doth spare his sheep, he doth not suffer them to do so much hurt as they would. This Herod was not so courteous, that he would stick to win peace or the people's favour with the punishment of an hundred men or more.

Wherefore, we must think with ourselves that he was tied by one that had the rule over him, that he might not more vehemently oppress the Church. He slew James, as, when any sedition is raised, the heads and captains go first to the pot,[1] that the common riff-raff may by their punishment be terrified. Nevertheless, the Lord suffered him whom he had furnished with constancy to be put to death, that by death he might get the victory as a strong and in-

[1] "In duces et capita animadverti solet," punishment is usually inflicted on the heads and captains.

vincible champion. So that the attempts of tyrants notwithstanding, God maketh choice of sweet-smelling sacrifices to establish the faith of his gospel. Luke calleth this James which was slain the brother of John, that he may distinguish him from the son of Alpheus. For whereas some make him a third cousin of Christ's, who was only some one of the disciples, I do not like of that, because I am by strong reasons persuaded to think that there were no more. Let him that will, repair to the second to the Galatians. Therefore, I think that the apostle and the son of Alpheus were all one, whom the Jews threw down headlong from the top of the temple, whose death was so highly commended for his singular praise of holiness.

3. *Seeing that it pleased the Jews.* It appeareth more plainly by this that Herod was not moved either with any zeal that he had to Moses' law, or with any hatred of the gospel, thus to persecute the Church; but that he might provide for his own private affairs, for he proceedeth in his cruelty that he may win the people's favour; therefore we must know that there be divers causes for which the Church is assaulted on every side. Oftentimes perverse zeal driveth the wicked headlong to fight for their superstitions, and that they may sacrifice an offering to their idols by shedding innocent blood; but the more part is moved with private commodities only, so in times past, at such time as Nero knew, after the burning of the city, that he was loathed and hated of the people, he sought by this subtile means to get into favour again, or, at least, he went about to stay their slanders and complaints, by putting certain thousands of the godly to death.

In like sort, that Herod may win the people's favour, who did love him but a little, he putteth the Christians to death as a price wherewith he might redeem their favour; and such is our estate at this day, for though all men run by troops upon the members of Christ,[1] yet few are pooked[2] for-

[1] "Insaniant," rage against. [2] "Incitat," instigated by.

ward with superstition; but some sell themselves to antichrist, like profitable bond-slaves; other some bear with, and commend the outrageous outcries of monks and the common people. But we, in the mean season, being abjects, must be glad to bear their mocks; yet there is one comfort which doth excellently keep us on foot, in that we know that our blood is precious in the sight of Almighty God, which the world doth shamefully abuse; yea, the more shamefully and reproachfully the wicked do handle us, so much the less shall God's goodness forsake us.

4. *Adding four quaternions of soldiers,* Luke doth, in this place, declare by circumstances that Peter was, as it were, shut up in his grave, so that it might seem that he was quite past hope; for as they divided the day and night into four parts by three hours, so Herod divided the watches, that four soldiers might always keep watch, and that one quaternion might succeed another every third hour. He showeth the cause why he was not forthwith put to death, because it had been an heinous offence to put him to death in the Easter holidays; therefore, Herod doth not delay the time as doubtful what to do, but doth only wait for opportunity; yea, he maketh choice of a time, when as his gift may be more plausible, because there came a great multitude together from all parts unto the holy day.[1]

5. *But prayers were made.* Luke teacheth here that the faithful did not, in the mean season, foreslow [neglect] their duty, Peter stood in the forward[2] alone; but all the rest fought with their prayers together with him, and they aided him so much as they were able. Hereby we do also gather, that they were not discouraged, for by prayer they testify that they persist so much as they are able in defence of the cause, for which Peter is in danger of life. This place teacheth, first, how we ought to be affected when we see our brethren persecuted by the wicked for the testimony of

[1] "Ad diem festum," to the feast, or festival. [2] "In prima acie," in the front rank, the van.

the gospel, for if we be slothful, and if we be not inwardly touched with their dangers, we do not only defraud them of the due duty of love, but also treacherously forsake the confession of our faith; and, assuredly, if the cause be common, yea, if they fight for our safety and salvation, we do not only forsake them, but even Christ and ourselves; and the present necessity requireth, that they be far more fervent in prayer than commonly they are, whosoever will be counted Christians. We see some of our brethren (being brought to extreme poverty) live in exile, others we see imprisoned, many cast into stinking dungeons, many consumed with fire, yea, we see new torments oftentimes invented, whereby being long tormented they may feel death. Unless these provocations sharpen our desire to pray, we be more than blockish; therefore, so soon as any persecution ariseth, let us by and by get ourselves to prayer.

Also, it is a likely thing that the Church took greater thought for Peter's life, because they should have suffered great loss if he had gone.[1] Neither doth Luke say barely that *prayer was made;* but he addeth also, that it was *earnest* and continual, whereby he giveth us to understand that the faithful prayed not coldly or over fields;[2] but so long as Peter was in the conflict, the faithful did what they could to help him, and that without wearisomeness. We must always understand the name of God, which is here expressed, whensoever mention is made of prayer in the Scripture, for this is one of the chiefest and first principles of faith, that we ought to direct our prayers unto God alone, as he challengeth to himself this peculiar worship, "Call upon me in the day of tribulation," (Psalm l. 15.)

6. *And when Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night slept Peter between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers kept the prison before the door.*
7. *And, behold, the angel of the Lord stood, and a light shined in the habitation: and he smote Peter's side, saying, Arise straightway; and his chains fell from his hands.*

[1] "In ejus morte," in his death. [2] "Defunctorie," perfunctorily.

8. *And the angel said to him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And he did so. Then he saith to him, Put thy garment about thee, and follow me.*
9. *And going out, he followed him, neither understood he that that was true which was done by the angel; but he thought that he saw a vision.*
10. *And when they were past the first watch, and the second, they came to the iron gate, which leadeth into the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and when they were come out, they passed through one street, and by and by the angel departed from him.*
11. *Then Peter returning to himself, said, Now of a truth I know that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the waiting of the people of the Jews.*

6. *When he was about to bring him forth.* It seemeth at the first blush that the Church prayeth to small purpose, for the day was now appointed wherein Peter should be put to death, and he is within one night of death, and yet the faithful cease not to pray, because they know that when the Lord doth purpose to deliver his, he taketh his time oftentimes in the last and farthest point of necessity, and that he hath in his hand divers ways to deliver. Secondly, we may think that they did not so much pray for Peter's life, as that the Lord would arm him with invincible fortitude, for the glory of the gospel, and that God would [not] set the gospel of his Son open to the reproaches and slanders of the wicked.

That night he slept. All these circumstances do more set forth the wonderful power of God, for who would not have thought that Peter was already swallowed up of death? for though he drew breath as yet, yet he had no chinch [chink] to creep out at, for as much as he was beset with many deaths. Therefore, whereas he escapeth from amidst deaths, whereas he goeth safely among the hands of his hangmen, whereas the chains are molten and are loosed, whereas the iron gate openeth itself to him; hereby it appeareth that it was a mere divine kind of deliverance, and

it was profitable for Peter to be thus taught by these signs, that he might with more assurance forthwith declare unto men the grace of God thus known. Again, it appeareth by this strait keeping that Herod meant nothing less[1] than to let Peter go away alive.

7. *A light shined.* It is to be thought that Peter alone saw this light, and that the soldiers did either sleep so soundly, or else were so amazed, that they neither felt nor perceived any thing. And there might be two causes why God would have the light to shine; either that Peter might have the use thereof, and that the darkness might be no hindrance to him, or that it might be to him a sign and token of the heavenly glory. For we read oftentimes that the angels appeared with glistering brightness, even when the sun did shine. Assuredly, Peter might have gathered by the strange light that God was present, and also he ought to have made his profit thereof. When as the angel smiteth Peter's side, it appeareth hereby what a care God hath for his, who watcheth over them when they sleep, and raiseth them when they are drowsy. And surely there were nothing more miserable than we, if the continuance of our prayers alone did keep God in his watching over us; for such is the infirmity of our flesh that we faint and quail, and we stand most of all in need of his help when our minds, being drawn away, do not seek him. Sleep is a certain image of death, and doth choke and drown all the senses, what should become of us if God should then cease to have respect to us? But forasmuch as when the faithful go to sleep, they commit their safety to God, it cometh to pass by this means, that even their sleep doth call upon God.

Whereas he saith, that immediately after the angel had said the word the chains were loosed, we gather by this, that there is power enough in the commandment of God

[1] "Nihil Herodi fuisse minus in animo," that there was nothing Herod less intended.

alone to remove all manner [of] lets, when all ways seem to be stopt on all sides, so that if he intend to appease the motions and tumults of war, although the whole world were appointed in armour, their spears and swords shall forthwith fall out of their hands; on the other side, if he be determined to punish us and our sins with war, in a moment, (in the twinkling of an eye,) their minds, which were before given to peace, shall wax hot, and they shall lay hand on their swords. Whereas Luke setteth down severally both the words of the angel, and also the course of the matter, it serveth for the more certainty of the history, that it may in every respect appear that Peter was delivered by God.

9. *He knew not that it was true.* He did not think that it was a vain or false visor, as Satan doth oftentimes delude men with jugglings; but *true* is taken in this place for that which is done naturally and after the manner of men. For we must note the contrariety [antithesis] that is between the thing itself and the vision. Furthermore, though he think that it is a vision, yet doth he willingly obey; whereby his obedience is proved, whilst that being content with the commandment of the angel alone, he doth not inquire nor reason what he must do, but doth that which he is commanded to do.

10. *When they were past.* God was able to have carried Peter away in the turning of an hand;[1] but he overcometh divers straits one after another, that the glory of the miracle might be the greater. So he created the world in six day, (Genesis i.) not because he had any need of space of time, but that he might the better stay us in the meditating upon his works, (Exod. xx. 11,) for he applieth the manner of doing unto our capacity, and unto the increase of faith. If Peter had at a sudden been carried unto the house where the brethren were assembled, then should one only

[1] "Momento uno," in one moment.

deliverance have been acknowledged, but now we see, as it were with our eyes, that he was delivered more than ten times.

11. *Then Peter returning to himself.* It is word for word, being made in himself, because, being before astonied with a strange and incredible thing, he was, as it were, without himself. But now at length, as it were after a trance, he knoweth that he is delivered from death. His words set down by Luke contain a thanksgiving; for he extolleth with himself the benefit of God which he had tried, [experienced,] and whereof he had tasted, and he doth highly commend it with himself, until he find some other witnesses. He saith that the angel was sent of God, according to the common meaning of the godly, who hold that the angels are appointed to be ministers, to be careful for, and to take charge of their safety; for unless he had been thus persuaded, he would not have spoken of the angel. And yet he doth not commend the angel as the author of the grace, but he ascribeth all the whole praise of the work to God alone, neither do the angels help us to this end, that they may derive unto themselves even the least jot of God's glory. Whereas he saith that he was delivered out of the hand of Herod, he amplifieth the goodness and benefit of God, by the power of his enemy. To the same end tendeth that which he addeth of the Jews; for the greater the number of the enemies was, the more excellent was the grace of God toward his servant; for it is a great matter that God alone being favourable, the deadly hatred of all the whole world should come to nought.

12. *And, considering, he came into the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered and praying.*
13. *And when Peter had knocked at the entry-door, a maid came out to hearken, named Rhoda.*
14. *And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the door for joy, but running in, she told that Peter stood without.*

15. *But they said to her, Thou art mad. But she affirmed more vehemently that it was so. But they said, It is his angel.*
16. *But Peter continued knocking: when they had opened, they saw him, and they were astonished.*
17. *But after that he had beckoned to them with the hand, that they should hold their peace, he told them how God had brought him out of prison. And he said, Tell James and the brethren these things. And he departed thence, and went into another place.*
18. *After that it was day, there was no small ado amongst the soldiers, what was become of Peter.*
19. *And when Herod had sought him, and could not find him, so soon as he knew the matter, he commanded the keepers to be carried away,* [executed.]

12. *Into the house of Mary.* It appeareth that she was a matron of rare godliness, whose house was, as it were, a certain temple of God, where the brethren did use to meet together. And Luke saith that there were many assembled there, because, seeing they could not all meet together in one place without fear of some tumult, they came together in divers places of the city in companies, as they could conveniently. For, doubtless, there were other companies gathered together elsewhere, because it is not to be thought that (at such times as many of the faithful did give themselves to prayer) the apostles were not in like sort occupied, and one house could not hold so many. And we must always mark the circumstance of time, because, even in the heat of the enemy's cruelty, the godly were, notwithstanding, assembled together. For if, at any time, this exercise be profitable, then is it most necessary when hard conflicts approach.

15. *When he did knock at the gate.* Whereas they think that the maid is mad, which telleth them that Peter was come; we gather by this, that they did not hope or look for Peter's deliverance, and yet we will not say that they prayed without faith; because they looked for some other success, to wit, that Peter being armed with power from

heaven, should be ready, whether it were by life or death, to glorify God,[1] that the flock being terrified with the violent invasion of wolves might not be scattered abroad, that those that were weak might not faint, that the Lord would put away that whirlwind of persecution. But in that the Lord granteth them more than they hoped for, he surpasseth their desires with his infinite goodness. And now that which was done seemeth to them incredible, that they may be the more provoked to praise his power.

It is his angel. They call him his angel, who was by God appointed to be his keeper and the minister of his safety. In which sense Christ saith that the angels of little ones do always see the face of his Father, (Matth. xviii. 10.) And what do they gather hence commonly? that every particular man hath a particular angel, which taketh charge of him; but it is too weak. For the Scripture doth sometimes testify (Exod. xiv. 10) that there is one angel given to a great people, and to one man only a great host. For Elizeus [Elisha] his servant had his eyes opened, so that he saw in the air chariots of fire, which were appointed to defend the prophet, (2 Kings vi. 17.) And in Daniel there is but one angel of the Persians, and one of the Grecians named, (Dan. x. 5, 12.) Neither doth the Scripture promise to every man a certain and peculiar angel, but rather that the Lord hath charged his angels to keep all the faithful, (Psalm xci. 11;) also that they pitch their tents about the godly, (Psalm xxxiv. 8.) Therefore, that vain surmise which is common touching the two angels of every man is profane. Let this be sufficient for us, that the whole host of heaven doth watch for the safety of the Church; and that as necessity of time requireth sometimes one angel, sometimes more do defend us with their aid. Assuredly, this is inestimable goodness of God, in that he saith that the angels, who are the beams of his brightness, are our ministers.

[1] "Christi nomen," the name of Christ.

17. *Tell James and the brethren.* By brethren I understand not every one that was of the Church, but the apostles and elders. For though it were requisite that the miracle should be made known to all, yet will Peter worthily for honour's sake, have his fellows in office to be certified thereof. Ecclesiastical writers after Eusebius report that this *James* was one of the disciples; but forasmuch as Paul reckoneth him in the number of the three pillars of the Church, (Gal. ii. 9,) I do not think that a disciple was advanced to that dignity, and the apostles set aside. Wherefore, I do rather conjecture, that this was James the son of Alpheus, whose holiness was such, that it caused the Jews to wonder at it. And there be two reasons for which Peter would have this joyful message brought unto the brethren; to wit, that he might rid them of that care which did vex them; secondly, that they might be encouraged with such an example of God's goodness to be the more bold. Whereas he passeth into another place, I think it was done for this cause, because, forasmuch as the house was well known and famous, because many of the brethren resorted thither, he might lie hid elsewhere with less danger. Therefore, he sought a place which was not so much suspected of the enemy, and that he might not only save himself, but also his hostess and others.

18. *When it was day.* Luke returneth now unto Herod and the soldiers; and he saith that there was no small ado amongst them. For they could not suspect that Peter was taken from them by violence, or that he was escaped by some subtle shift. Herod examineth the matter afterward as a judge; but when as he perceived that the soldiers were in no fault, he himself is also enforced to be a witness of the deliverance wrought by God. Whereas he commandeth them to be carried out of his sight, or to be carried to prison, we may thereby gather, that their faithfulness and diligence were approved and seen; for if there had been any suspicion of negligence, there was punishment prepared

for them; but the cause why he doth not let them go free was partly rage, mixed with tyrannous cruelty, and partly shamefacedness. Though some expound it otherwise, that he commanded that they should be punished forthwith.[1] And whether, being angry, he delivered them to the hangman, or he was content to punish them with perpetual imprisonment, it is assuredly an excellent example of blindness, that whereas he ought to perceive the power of God, yea, though his eyes were shut, yet doth he not bend, neither doth he wax more meek, but proceedeth to resist God of obstinate malice. Thus doth Satan deprive the wicked of understanding, that in seeing they see not; and the Lord, by smiting them with this horrible amazedness, doth justly revenge himself and his Church.

And descending from Judea to Cesarea, he stayed there.

20. *And Herod was offended with those of Tyre and Sidon: but they came unto him with one consent, and persuading Blastus, the chamberlain to the king, they required peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country.*

21. *And upon a day appointed Herod arrayed himself in royal apparel, and sitting upon his throne, he made an oration unto them.*

22. *And the people cried, It is the voice of God, and not of man.*

23. *And straightway the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not the glory to God: and being eaten of worms, he died.*

24. *Furthermore, the word of God did increase and multiply.*

25. *And Barnabas and Paul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, having finished their office, taking John with them, which was called Mark.*

20. A worthy[2] history, which doth not only show, as it were in a glass, what end is prepared for the enemies of the Church, but also how greatly God hateth pride. The Scripture saith that "God resisteth the proud," (1 Pet. v. 5.) God himself did show a lively image thereof in the person of

[1] "Extemplo ad supplicium rapi," that they should be immediately dragged off to execution. [2] "Memorabilis," a memorable.

Herod. And assuredly men cannot extol themselves higher than becometh them, but they shall make war with God, who, to the end he may surpass all,[1] commandeth all flesh to keep silence. And if God did so sharply punish pride in a king whom prosperity did puff up, what shall become of those of the common sort who are ridiculously puffed up without cause? Furthermore, we must note the course of the history, that all things go well with Herod after that he had miserably vexed the Church; he enforced the nations round about him, being tamed with hunger, to come to crave pardon upon their knees, as if God had rewarded him well for his wicked fury. This was no small trial for the godly, who might have thought thus with themselves,[2] that God cared not for them, and they were afraid lest with Herod's power his tyranny and cruelty should increase. But the Lord had another purpose,[3] for he set the oppressor of his Church on high that he might have the greater fall. Therefore, that shadowish felicity, wherein he delighted too much, was unto him a certain fatting against the day of slaughter. In like sort, when at this day we see the bloody enemies of the Church carried up upon the wings of fortune into heaven, there is no cause why we should be discouraged; but let us rather call to mind that saying of Solomon, "Pride goeth before calamity; and the heart is lifted up before a fall," (Prov. xvi. 18.)

Herod was displeased. Luke useth the compound participle, θυμομαχον, which signifieth *privy grudging* or *hatred.* Therefore Herod did not make open war against those cities; but such was his displeasure, that he essayed to subdue them by policy, as it were by undermining them by little and little. It is a rare matter, saith Demosthenes, for free cities to agree with monarchs. Moreover, Herod was naturally cruel, bold, of insatiable covetousness; and it is not to be doubted but that Tyre and Sidon were, as it were,

[1] "Ut solus emineat," that he alone may have the pre-eminence.

[2] "Quibus obrepere suspicio poterat," who might be led to suspect.

[3] "Sed longa aliud fuit Dei consilium," but very different was the purpose of God.

certain bars or rails to stay his fury, as they were wealthy cities, and unaccustomed to bear the yoke. Also, the remembrance of their old glory might have encouraged them; forasmuch as pride cometh commonly of wealth, it is no marvel if these two cities were proud, the one whereof Isaiah calleth queen of the seas, whose merchants, he said, were kings, and her chapmen dukes, (Isaiah xxiii. 8.) Also, he saith elsewhere that Sidon was become proud by reason of her wealth. And although they had sundry times been brought almost to utter ruin, yet the commodiousness of their situation did shortly restore them to their wonted state. Hereby it came to pass that they could more hardly digest Agrippa, of late a base fellow, a man of no estimation,[1] and one who had been let out of prison; especially seeing that he had behaved himself so cruelly toward his own subjects, and was troublesome and injurious to his neighbours.

Forasmuch as their country was nourished. It had not been good for him to have assailed the men of Tyre and Sidon with open war, therefore he giveth commandment that there should no corn nor victual be carried[2] out of his realm. By this means did he, without any army, besiege them by little and little. For the borders of both cities were strait, and their ground barren, whereas there was a great people to be fed. Therefore, after that they were tamed with hunger, they humbly crave peace, and that not free, for assuredly they had some laws given them; and it is to be thought that this Blastus mentioned by Luke was not with bare words persuaded, but with rewards [gifts] won to entreat the peace.[3] I know not why Erasmus did think it good to translate this place otherwise than the words import.

21. *Upon an appointed day.* Luke saith that the men of Tyrus and Sidon had peace granted them, because this was

[1] "Obscuræ fortunæ," of obscure origin. [2] "Illis . . . importari," be imported to them. [3] "Ut pacis esset interpres," to intercede for peace.

the occasion of the king's oration, without doubt, that he might make them his underlings hereafter. The same history is extant in Josephus, in his Nineteenth Book of Antiquities, save only that he calleth him everywhere Agrippa, whom Luke calleth Herod. It is to be thought that Agrippa was his proper name, and that he was called by none other name so long as he was a private man; but after that he was advanced to be a king, he took to himself princely dignity, according to the name of his grandfather. Josephus and Luke agree together wonderfully in the thing itself, and in all circumstances. First, they agree concerning the place. Josephus saith, That his garment was embroidered with gold, on which, when the sun-beams light, it did glister again; and that this was the cause which moved the courtiers to call him[1] a god. That he was suddenly wounded; also, that there was seen an owl sitting upon a cord over his head, which cord did prognosticate his ruin. And he is so far from doubting that his sacrilegious pride was punished with this kind of punishment, that he saith, that he confessed the same openly amidst his cruel torments, "Behold me, whom you call a god; I am enforced to finish my life most miserable." There is no mention made thére of the peace made with those of Tyrus and Sidon; but that he made and set forth plays[2] in honour of Cæsar. But it may be that the solemnity of the plays was appointed in respect of the peace concluded, which we know was a solemn thing.

23. *Forthwith he smote him.* As, before, the angel was a minister of God's grace in the delivery of Peter, so now he taketh vengeance upon Herod. And God doth sometimes use the ministry of angels in heaven in punishing; but sometimes he maketh the devils as hangmen, by whose hand he executeth his judgments. And this doth he as well toward his faithful servants as toward the reprobate. Saul was troubled and vexed by Satan, (1 Sam. xvi. 14,) but the same did also befal holy Job, (Job i. 12; ii. 7.) In the

[1] "Consulataret," to salute him as.

[2] "Ludos celebraret," celebrated games.

Psalms, the punishments wherewith God doth chasten the wicked are attributed to the evil angels; yet we see how the angel which had the government of the safety of the Church smiteth the Egyptians in the first-begotten, (Exod. xii. 29;) although the Scripture calleth the wicked spirits God's spirits, because they are obedient to his commandment, though full sore against their will. But where the epithet *evil* is not added, as in this place, we must understand the angel which doth willingly obey God, and yet the shape of the owl, whereof Josephus maketh mention, did rather serve to figure the devil than an heavenly angel.

Furthermore, I dare not affirm for a surety what manner of disease that was. The word which Luke useth doth signify that he was eaten up of worms. Many conjecture that it was a lousy disease. This is certain, that even when he was yet alive he was corrupt with stink and rottenness, so that he was, as it were, a living carcase. So that he was not only vexed with cruel torments, but also made a laughing-stock to all men, and of all men reviled. For God intended to make choice of a kind of punishment wherewith he might repress the cruelty of a proud man with extreme ignominy. If he had been overcome of some great and valiant army, and had been brought to poverty, the judgment of God had not been so marked; and this had been an honest and princely chastisement;[1] but forasmuch as he abhorreth lice and worms, and this filthiness cometh out of his body, which doth kill him by eating him up, he is handled according to his deserts.

In like sort Pharaoh, forasmuch as he did so oft exalt himself against God with untamed pride, he was not orderly assailed by some prince that did border upon him, but locusts and caterpillars were God's warriors [soldiers] to make war against him, (Exod. viii. 17, 24;) for the more proudly a man exalteth himself, the more doth he deserve to be cast down of God into the lowest hell with shame and reproach. This is the reason why he set this feigned god Herod to be

[1] "Liberalis et regia castigatio," a dignified and royal chastisement.

eaten up of worms, which he was at length enforced to grant, when he said, "Behold me, whom ye saluted as a god; I die miserable." Such a manifest example of horrible vengeance in a king's person ought to terrify us not a little from presuming to take to ourselves more than we ought; and that we do not suffer ourselves to be made drunk with the false commendation and flattery of men as with deadly poison.

Because he gave not the glory to God. He is condemned of sacrilege, not only because he suffered himself to be called God, but because, forgetting himself, he took to himself the honour due to God. We do not read that the king of Babylon was thus extolled; and yet the prophet upbraideth to him that he went about to make himself equal with God, (Isa. xiv. 13, 14.) Therefore this sacrilege is a common fault in all proud men, because, by taking to themselves more than they ought, they darken the glory of God; and so, like giants, so much as ever they are able, they endeavour to pluck God out of his seat. Howsoever, they do not usurp the title of God, neither openly boast with their mouth that they are gods; yet because they take to themselves that which is proper to God, they desire to be, and to be accounted gods, having brought him under. Furthermore, the prophet pointeth out the beginning of this evil in one word, when he bringeth in Nebuchadnezzar speaking on this wise, "I will go up," (Isa. xiv. 13.)

Wherefore there is but one remedy, if every one keep himself in that degree wherein he is placed. Let those who are base and castaways [in a humble station] not desire to climb higher; let kings, and those who are above others, remember that they are mortal, and let them modestly submit their highness to God. And we must note, that it is not enough if men give to God only half the honour which is due to him, who challengeth all that wholly which is his own; if they submit themselves but in part, whom he will have to be thoroughly humbled. Now, forasmuch as the Scripture despoileth us quite of all praise of wisdom, virtue, and righteousness, there is no one of us that can take to himself the least jot of glory

without sacrilegious robbing of God. And it is a wonder that, seeing the Scripture pronounceth that all those make, as it were, open war against God which exalt themselves; and we do all grant that that cannot be done without our overthrow, [destruction;] the greatest part of men runneth, notwithstanding, headlong with furious boldness unto their own destruction; for there is scarce one of an hundred who, being mindful of his condition, doth leave to God his glory undiminished.

24. *And the word of God.* When the tyrant was once taken out of the way the Church was suddenly delivered, as it were, out of the jaws of the wolf. Therefore, though the faithful be accounted as sheep appointed to be slain, (Psalm xliv. 23,) yet the Church doth always overlive her enemies; and though the word of God seem oftentimes to be oppressed with the wicked tyranny of men, yet it getteth up the head again by and by, (Rom. viii. 37.) For Luke determined[1] not only what had happened after that Herod was dead, but also by this example to encourage us, that we may be assured that God will do that, in all ages, which he then did, to the end the gospel may at length break through all impediments of the enemies, and that the more the Church is diminished, it may the more increase through the heavenly blessing.

25. *And Barnabas and Paul.* The ministry which Luke saith Barnabas and Paul did finish, must be referred unto the alms, whereof mention was made before. For after that Agabus the prophet had foretold the famine and barrenness, the brethren gathered money at Antioch, whereby they might relieve the necessity of the church which was at Jerusalem; the carrying of this money was committed to Barnabas and Paul. Now Luke saith that they returned to Antioch, that he may pass over unto a new history. He addeth, *that they took with them John, whose*

[1] "Enim consilium Lucæ fuit," for it was the purpose of God.

surname was Mark, whose mother was honourably commended before, that he might keep them company, who was afterward, as we shall see, a cause of grievous and dangerous [hurtful] discord between them.

CHAPTER XIII.

1. *And there were in the church which was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon, called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod and Saul.*
2. *And as they ministered unto the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate to me Barnabas and Saul unto the work whereto I have called them.*
3. *Then after they had fasted and prayed, and laid the hands upon them, they let them go.*

Here followeth an history, not only worthy to be remembered, but also very profitable to be known, how Paul was appointed the teacher of the Gentiles; for his calling was, as it were, a key whereby God opened to us the kingdom of heaven. We know that the covenant of eternal life was properly concluded with the Jews, so that we had nothing to do with God's inheritance, forasmuch as we were strangers, (Eph. ii. 12;) and the wall of separation was between, which did distinguish those of the household from strangers. Therefore it had profited us nothing, that Christ brought salvation unto the world, unless, the disagreement being taken away, there had been some entrance made for us into the Church. The apostles had already received commandment touching the preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world, (Mark xvi. 16,) but they had kept themselves until this time within the borders of Judea. When Peter was sent to Cornelius, it was a thing

so new and strange, that it was almost counted a monster, [prodigy.] Secondly, that might seem to be a privilege granted to a few men extraordinarily; but now, forasmuch as God doth plainly and openly appoint Paul and Barnabas to be apostles of the Gentiles, by this means he maketh them equal with the Jews; that the gospel may begin to be common as well to the one as to the other. And now the wall of separation is taken away, that both those who were far off and those which were nigh hand may be reconciled to God; and that being gathered under one head, they may grow together to be one body. Therefore Paul's calling ought to be of no less weight amongst us, than if God should cry from heaven in the hearing of all men, that the salvation, promised in times past to Abraham, and to the seed of Abraham, (Gen. xxii. 17,) doth no less appertain unto us at this day, than if we had come out of the loins of Abraham. For this cause is it that Paul laboureth so much[1] in defence and avouching of his calling, (Gal. i. 1, 12–24;) that the Gentiles may assuredly persuade themselves that the doctrine of the gospel was not brought to them by chance, neither by man's rashness, but, first, by the wonderful counsel of God; secondly, by express commandment, whilst that he made that known to men which he had decreed with himself.

1. *There were in the church.* I have declared in the fourth to the Ephesians, (Eph. iv. 11,) and in the twelfth of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. xii. 28,) what difference there is (at least in my judgment) between doctors and prophets. It may be that they are in this place synonyma, [synonymous,] (or that they signify both one thing,) so that this is Luke's meaning, that there were many men in that church endowed with singular grace of the Spirit to teach. Surely I cannot see how it can hang together, to understand by prophets those which were endowed with the gift of foretelling things; but I think rather that it signifieth excellent interpreters of Scripture. And such had

[1] "Multis locis," in many passages, omitted.

the office to teach and exhort, as Paul doth testify in the fourteenth of the First to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) We must mark Luke's drift: Paul and Barnabas were ministers of the church of Antioch; God calleth them thence now unto another place. Lest any man should think that that church was destitute of good and fit ministers, so that God did provide for other churches with the loss of it, Luke preventeth this, and saith, that there was such store there, that though it did help others, yet did there remain sufficient for the use thereof; whereby appeareth how plentifully God had poured out his grace upon the Church, whence rivers, as it were, might be deducted and carried into divers places.

So even in our time God doth so enrich certain churches more than others, that they be seminaries to spread abroad the doctrine of the gospel. It must needs be that Manaen, who was brought up with Herod, came of some noble family. And this doth Luke recite of purpose that he may set forth to us his godliness who, despising worldly pomp, had coupled himself to the simple and despised flock of Christ. He might, indeed, have been a principal courtier if he had been ruled by ambition; but that he may wholly addict himself to Christ, he refuseth not to change those smokes of honour with [for] reproach and ignominy. For if we consider in what state the Church stood then, he could not give his name to the gospel, unless he should make himself subject[1] to common infamy. Therefore the Lord meant to teach us, by his example, to despise the world, that those may learn with a valiant and lofty mind to despise the world, who cannot otherwise be true Christians, unless they cast away those things which are precious to the flesh, as hurtful lets and hinderances.

2. *And they ministered to the Lord.* The word which Luke useth doth not only signify to be occupied about holy things, but also sometimes to bear public offices. And be-

[1] "Quin se . . . subjiceret," without subjecting himself.

cause the holy rites of the Gentiles did for the most part consist upon [of] burnt-offerings and sacrifices, it is oftentimes taken for *to offer sacrifice;* which sense did well like the Papists, that they might prove that the apostles did use some sacrifice. But admit it were so; yet do they foolishly pretend for defence of their mass, that the teachers of Antioch did sacrifice. First, forasmuch as the word is of the plural number, it followeth that every one of them did say mass. But letting toys pass, I say we must consider what manner of sacrifice Christ commended to his Church. The Papists feign that the office of priesthood is enjoined them, to sacrifice Christ, and by sacrificing him to redeem peace with God. There is so little mention made hereof in Scripture, that the Son of God doth rather challenge this honour to himself alone. Wherefore Christ's Church hath another priesthood, to wit, that every man may offer himself and his to God; and that the public ministers may sacrifice to God, souls, with the spiritual sword of the gospel, as Paul teacheth, (Rom. xv. 16.) Moreover, the prayers of all the godly are the spiritual calves of the lips, (Hosea xiv. 2,) wherewith God is well pleased, when they are offered up upon the holy altar; that is, in Christ's name, [as] in the thirteenth to the Hebrews, (Heb. xiii. 15.) Therefore, when Luke saith that the prophets and teachers ministered to God when the Spirit spake to them, I understand nothing else but that they were in the public action. He addeth *fasting*, that we may know that their minds were then free from all impediments, that nothing might hinder them from giving attendance to prophesying. But the question is,[1] whether they kept a common fast, or Luke doth only signify that they were fasting then until that time. This is, without question, that these circumstances were expressed, that Paul's calling may carry the more credit amongst us.

Separate to me. God commandeth that Paul and Barnabas be sent, by the consent of the Church, thither whither he had appointed them to be sent; whereby we gather

[1] "Dubium est," it is doubtful.

that there is no lawful election of pastors, save only wherein God is chief. For whereas he hath commanded that the Church should elect pastors and bishops, he hath not therefore granted men so much liberty, but that he will bear the chief sway as the chief governor. The ordinary election of pastors differeth from this appointing of Paul and Barnabas, because it was requisite that they should be appointed by the heavenly oracle to be the apostles of the Gentiles; which is not necessary to be done daily in ordaining pastors. But they agree in this, that as God did testify that Paul and Barnabas were already appointed by his decree to preach the gospel, so none may be called unto the office of teaching save only those whom God hath already chosen to himself after a sort.

Furthermore, there is no need that the Spirit should cry to us out of heaven, that he is called of God about whom we are,[1] because we receive those, as it were, from hand to hand, (as they say,) whom God hath furnished with necessary gifts, forasmuch as they are framed and made fit by his hand. But whereas Luke saith in this place, that Paul was appointed by the voices and consents[2] of the Church; it doth seem not to agree with Paul's own words, where he doth deny that he was called of men, or by men, (Gal. i. 1.) I answer, that he was made an apostle long before, (and that by no voices [suffrages] of men,) before such time as he was sent unto the Gentiles; and he had now already executed the office of an apostle many years, when he was called to go unto the Gentiles by a new oracle. Wherefore, that he may have God for the author of his apostleship, it is not without cause that he excludeth men. And he doth not now command that he be ordained by the Church therefore, [viz.] that his calling may depend upon men; but God publisheth that his decree, which was as yet known to a few, and that with a public commandment, and he commandeth that it be sealed with the solemn subscription of

[1] "Divinitus vocatum esse eum de quo agitur," that he of whom we treat (whose election is in question) is divinely called. [2] "Suffragiis," by the suffrages.

the Church. Therefore, this is the meaning of the words, That this is the time wherein Paul must preach the gospel among the Gentiles, and the wall being pulled down, he must gather a Church of the Gentiles, who were before strangers from the kingdom of God, (Eph. ii. 14.) For although God had used him hitherto at Antioch and elsewhere, this was now added as a peculiar thing, that God did intend to adopt the Gentiles into the same inheritance of life with the Jews. But and if he were thus created a teacher of the Church from the beginning, he should not then have been called at that time by men. For, seeing the Lord doth pronounce that he had called him, what doth he leave for the Church, save only that they subscribe obediently? For men's judgment is not here put as in a doubtful matter, neither have their voices and consents any freedom. But we must mark what I have already said, that Paul and Barnabas are not now only appointed teachers, but they have an extraordinary office enjoined them, that they may begin to bring the grace of God commonly unto the Gentiles. And that do the words import, when it is said, *Separate to the work.* For undoubtedly he speaketh of a new work, and which had heretofore not been used.

But how is Barnabas in this place appointed to be Paul's companion and fellow in office, who, as far as we can read, did never execute the office of teaching? yea, who did always give Paul leave to teach, without saying anything himself? I answer, that he had occasions enough offered him to speak in Paul's absence, so that they had both of them enough to do. For one could not always be present in all places. It is not to be doubted but that he did faithfully discharge that duty which God had enjoined him, and that he was no dumb looker-on. And why should we wonder that Luke doth not set down his sermons in plain words, seeing that he scarce repeateth one of a thousand of Paul's?

The Spirit said. Whatsoever Macedonius and his sect

object that they may turn their backs,[1] yet we have a more plain and sound testimony of the divine essence of the Spirit in this place, than that they can escape it and make it frustrate. There is nothing more proper to God than with his power and commandment to govern the Church alone; but the Spirit challengeth this right when he commandeth that Paul and Barnabas be separated to him, and testifieth that they were called by his beck. Assuredly we must needs confess that the body of the Church is lame and without a head, unless we confess that it is God who ordereth the same at his pleasure, who setteth teachers over it, who governeth the proceedings and order thereof. We shall have afterwards chapter xx., in Paul's sermon, (Acts xx. 28,) that all bishops are placed by the Holy Ghost, which govern the Church; but no man is to be counted a lawful pastor of the Church, as the same Paul witnesseth, save he which is called of God; neither doth God point out false prophets by any other mark, save only by this, that he hath not sent them; therefore, we gather that the Holy Ghost is God indeed, whose authority is sufficient to choose pastors, and who hath the chief rule in choosing them, which is likewise confirmed out of the words of Isaiah, "And now, behold, the Lord hath sent me, and his Spirit," (Isaiah xlviii. 16.) Furthermore, we must note out of these words, that he is a person truly subsisting in God; for if we admit Sabellius's invention, that the word Spirit importeth no person,[2] but that it is a bare adjunct, [epithet,] that shall be a foolish and absurd speech, that the Holy Ghost hath said,[3] Isaias also should foolishly ascribe to him the sending of a prophet.

3. *When they had fasted and prayed.* That they may obey the oracle, they do not only send Paul and Barnabas away; but also with a solemn rite they appoint them to be

[1] "Tergiversandi causa," for the sake of tergiversation. [2] "Hypostasin non designet," does not designate a hypostasis. [3] "Inepta et absurda erit loquutio, quod Spiritus Sanctus dixerit," the expression, "that the Holy Spirit said," will be absurd and inept.

the apostles of the Gentiles; it is without question that this was a public fast. Luke said before, that they were fasting, forasmuch as they were busied in their ministry: it might be that that was according to the custom; but now there is another reason, for in appointing a public fast, which used to be done in hard matters and of great importance, they provoke both themselves and others unto an earnest ferventness in prayer, for this is oftentimes added in Scripture as a help to prayer; but (it was a matter of such weight to erect the kingdom of Christ amongst the Gentiles) the teachers of Antioch do not without cause earnestly pray the Lord, that he will enable his servants;[1] and that was not the end of their prayer, that God would, by his Spirit of wisdom and discretion, govern their judgments in choosing, because all disputation or doubting concerning this matter was taken away; but that God would furnish those with the Spirit of wisdom and strength whom he had already chosen to himself, that he would strengthen them with his power against all the invasions of Satan and the world, that he would bless their labours, that they might not be unfruitful, that he would open a gate for the new preaching of the gospel.

The laying on of hands which Luke reckoneth up, in the third place, was a kind of consecration, as we have said, (Acts vi. 6.) For the apostles retained the ceremony which was used amongst the Jews, according to the old custom of the law; as also kneeling, and such rites, which were profitable to exercise godliness. In sum, this is the end why they laid their hands upon Barnabas and Paul, that the Church might offer them to God, and that they might with their consent declare that this office was enjoined them by God; for the calling was properly God's alone, but the external ordaining did belong to the Church, and that according to the heavenly oracle.

4. *Therefore, when they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost, they went to Seleucia, and thence they sailed into Cyprus.*

5. *And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of*

[1] "Ut det pares servis suis humeros," that he may make the shoulders of his servants equal to the burden, may fit them for the office.

God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they had John also for their minister.

6. *And when they had passed over the island unto Paphos, they found a certain false prophet, a Jew, named Bar-jesus,*
7. *Who was with Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, a wise man; who, when he had called Barnabas and Paul, sought to hear the word of God.*
8. *And Elymas, the sorcerer, (for so is his name expounded,) resisted them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith.*
9. *And Saul, which was also called Paul, being full of the* [Holy] *Ghost, and looking stedfastly on him,*
10. *Said, O thou that art full of all deceit and wickedness, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, dost thou not cease to pervert the straight ways of the Lord?*
11. *And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And forthwith there fell upon him mist and darkness, and, going about, he sought some to lead him by the hand.*
12. *Then the proconsul, seeing what had happened, he believed, wondering at the doctrine of the Lord.*

4. *Being sent out by the Holy Ghost.* There is no mention made here of the election made by the Church, because it was altogether a divine calling; the Church did only receive those who were offered them by the hand of God. He saith, that they came first to Seleucia, which was a city of Syria. There was, indeed, a country of the same name; but it is more likely that Luke speaketh of the city, which was not far from Cyprus by sea.

5. He saith that they began to preach the gospel first in Salamis, a famous city of Cyprus. Notwithstanding, they seem to begin amiss; for whereas they were sent specially to the Gentiles, they preach the word of God, nevertheless, to the Jews, I answer, that they were not so addicted to the Gentiles, that, setting aside the Jews, it stood them upon to go straight to the Gentiles, for when God did make them teachers of the Gentiles, he did not depose them from the office which they had heretofore exercised; so that there was

no reason to let them, but that they might take pains, both with Jews and Gentiles;[1] yea, farther, it was meet that they should begin with the Jews, as we shall see in the end of the chapter. Moreover, Luke addeth by the way, that they were helped by John; for his meaning is not that he was their minister for any private use, or for the uses of body; but rather in that he was their helper to preach the gospel, he commendeth his godly study [zeal] and industry; not that the degree of honour was equal, but because the labour was common to all; for which cause he had the less excuse afterward, seeing that he forsook the holy calling.

6. *When they had passed over.* It is to be thought that this their passage was not altogether without fruit; and, assuredly, Luke would never have passed over with silence a general repulse; but it was sufficient for him to say that they were not idle in the office of teaching in their journey, seeing that he maketh haste unto a famous history, which he will set down immediately. And forasmuch as Salamis, situated upon the east coast, did look toward Syria, it was requisite that Paul and Barnabas should pass through the midst of the island unto the other side, that they might come to Paphos; for Paphos was a city situated upon the sea-coast toward the south. Furthermore, though all the island was dedicated to Venus, yet Paphos was the principal seat of the idol. For which cause the goodness of God is more wonderful, in that he would have the light of his gospel to pierce into such a filthy and cruel [dire] den. For we may thereby gather what manner of integrity and chastity, and honesty and temperance, was in that city, in that religion did grant liberty to the inhabitants to commit all manner of shameful and heinous offences.

They found a certain false prophet. Seeing that religion was quite corrupt among the Jews, it is no marvel if they fell away unto many wicked superstitions. And forasmuch

[1] "Ita nulla ratio prohibuit quin Judæis promiscue et Gentibus operam suam conferrent," so nothing prevented them from bestowing their labour promiscuously on Jews and Gentiles.

as they had hitherto professed that they worshipped a certain peculiar god, this was a fair colour to deceive withal, seeing that they might pretend the name of the unknown God at their pleasure; but this is a wonder how it was possible for Elymas, with his juggling, to cozen a grave and wise man. For we know that the Jews were at that time hated of all the world, and especially of the Romans, and with hatred was coupled extreme contempt of them.

Now Luke doth not without cause expressly commend Sergius's wisdom, lest any man should think that his foolishness and lightness was subject to the seducings of the sorcerer. His meaning was, indeed, to show in a clear mirror how frivolous and vain man's wisdom is, which cannot beware of such gross subtilty of Satan.

And assuredly where the truth of God doth not appear, the more men seem to be wise, the more filthily foolish are they. We see what filthy monsters of superstition did reign amongst the most witty Gentiles, and such as were furnished with all manner of learning. Therefore, there is neither judgment nor wisdom, save only from the Spirit of God. And this is the just vengeance of God upon all idolaters, that being delivered up to a reprobate sense they can discern nothing, (Rom. i. 28.) Though it may be that Sergius Paulus, being weary of superstitions, did then begin to desire a more pure worship of God, at such time as he [did] light upon that sorcerer. Which if we receive, it was surely a wonderful judgment of God, that he suffered a man godly-affected to throw himself headlong into the [deadly] snares of Satan. But God doth sometimes so exercise his elect, that he causeth them to wander many ways, before they be directed into the right way.

7. And whereas Sergius Paulus, desiring some better thing than that which he had learned from his childhood, was unaptly drawn aside unto divers superstitions, I gather hereby that he sendeth for Paul and Barnabas of his own accord, to teach him. Therefore, he had conceived a certain reverence and fear of God, though he knew him not as yet; and for-

asmuch as he was persuaded that that was the true God which was worshipped in Judea, he desired to know out of his word a pure and certain rule of godliness. So soon as he hath tasted of the dotings of the false prophet he standeth in doubt. And it is not to be doubted, but that God doth solicit his mind, that he may not be altogether stayed in vanity, though he suffered himself to be deceived for a time by a wicked man.

8. *To turn away the deputy from the faith.* No marvel if the seducer seek to put away the light, whereby he saw his own darkness driven away.[1] The same stour [contest] have we at this day with a number of babblers, who use to sell their smokes, and to shut, by all shifts possible, the eyes of the simple, that they may not behold the Sun of righteousness, being now risen. We must wrestle with such lets; for as there be [not] always and everywhere magicians present, which procure us some business,[2] Satan thrusteth in lets[3] enough, which possess our minds to drive away Christ, which the flesh is too ready to receive. Finally, both the enticements of the world and the wicked affections of our flesh are as many charms, whereby Satan ceaseth not to overthrow the faith.

9. *And Saul, who was also called Paul.* Luke showeth now how God brake the bond wherein the deputy was bound. For seeing that he was too much addicted to the magician, he could not embrace true doctrine as one that was free and at liberty; for the devil keepeth those minds (which he hath entangled) in his slavery after a wonderful and incredible manner, that they cannot see even the most plain truth; but so soon as he was once vanquished, Paul could easily enter in unto the deputy. And mark what Luke saith, that *the faith* is overthrown when the word of God is

[1] "Discuti," dispelled. [2] "Nam ut non semper et ubique præsto sint magi qui negotium nobis facessant," for though magicians are not always and everywhere present to give us trouble. [3] "Avocamenta," enticements.

resisted. Whence we may gather that faith is so grounded in the word, that without this shore[1] it fainteth at every assault; yea, that it is nothing else but the spiritual building of the word of God.

10. *O thou full of deceit.* It was not without a cause that Paul was thus hot and angry; for he had no hope to do any good if he should deal after some moderate and mild sort. We must always begin with doctrine, and those are also to be admonished, exhorted, and pricked forward, who do not as yet appear to be altogether obstinate. Neither doth Paul so vehemently inveigh against the sorcerer at the first dash; but when he seeth him maliciously and manifestly fight against the doctrine of godliness, he handleth him like a bond-slave of Satan. Thus must we deal with the desperate enemies of the gospel, in whom appeareth open contumacy and wicked contempt of God, especially when they stop the way before others. And lest any man should think that Paul was out of measure angry, Luke saith plainly that the inspiration of the Spirit was his guide. Wherefore this heat of zeal is not only not to be reprehended, but it ought to make the profane contemners of God sore afraid, who fear not to rebel against his word; forasmuch as this judgment is given upon them all not by mortal man, but by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of Paul.

As touching the words, this place refuteth their error who think that Paul took his name of the deputy, as if he had set up some token of victory. There may many reasons be brought, and those strong enough, on the contrary; but this one place is sufficient, where Luke showeth that at such time as the deputy was not brought to the faith he had two names. And it is not to be doubted but that he retained his own name[2] amongst the Jews; and we know that this was a usual thing, that those who were citizens of Rome should borrow some Italian name. Luke joineth *subtilty* with *deceit*, which is contrary to sincerity; to wit,

[1] "Fultura," prop or support. [2] "Gentile . . . nomen," his family name.

whilst crafty men transform their wit hither and thither, so that they have in them no simplicity; though the Greek word which Luke useth signifieth ready boldness to do hurt; but the former signification agreeth better. By the *son of the devil* is meant a reprobate and desperate man. Such are all those which resist maliciously, and as it were of set purpose, that which is just and right; therefore Paul addeth, that he is a great *enemy of all righteousness.*

Dost thou not cease to pervert? He calleth all that means whereby the Lord bringeth us unto himself the ways of the Lord. He testifieth that this is plain and straight; and he accuseth the sorcerer for making the same crooked, full of turnings, and doubtful, with his boughts and turns. Whence may be gathered a profitable doctrine, that it cometh to pass through the subtilty of Satan that we do not readily, with straight course, go unto the Lord. For he showeth us in his word a plain way, and such as is not thorny. Wherefore we must take good heed of seducers, which trouble the way with their ditches or thorns, or else make the same hard and unpleasant.

And it shall be convenient to repeat here that which I touched before, that the servants of Christ must not be blamed if they do sore inveigh against the professed enemies of sound doctrine, unless we will accuse the Holy Ghost of intemperance. Neither am I ignorant how easily men may fall in this point; for which cause godly teachers must take so much the more heed, first, that they favour not the affections of the flesh too much under the colour of zeal; secondly, that they break not out with headlong and unseasonable heat where there is yet place for moderation; thirdly, that they give not themselves over to foolish and uncomely railing, but only that they express the unseemliness of the thing by gravity and weight of words. Such was the vehemency of holy zeal and of the Spirit in the prophets, which if dainty and soft men judge troublesome and raging, they consider not how dear and precious God's truth is to him.

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liberty; but the office of exhorting was committed to certain men, whom he calleth rulers of the synagogue, or masters. Therefore Paul and Barnabas begin not forthwith to speak, lest they disturb the accustomed order with too much haste; but they do modestly stay till they have liberty granted them to speak, and that with their leave who had authority by public consent. We know how corrupt the state of that people was then; and Luke will at length declare, in the end of the chapter, that these men of Antioch were too stout and stubborn in receiving[1] the grace of Christ; and yet there remained this goodness among them, that their assemblies were honestly and decently governed;[2] for which cause such evil favoured confusion is so much the more shameful which is seen at this day among those who will be counted Christians. The Papists do indeed sing[3] the Scriptures in their churches with shrill and sounding voice, but in an unknown tongue, so that the people reap no fruit thereby. There is seldom any doctrine used; and it were better for the wicked babblers even then to hold their peace, who thrust in their own unclean inventions instead of the Word of God, and pollute with the stink of their impiety whatsoever is holy.

If there be in you? This speech doth signify that what grace soever is in men to edify the Church, it is, as it were, committed[4] to them; although the word *in*, according to the Hebrew phrase, may be superfluous. Therefore, I stand not greatly upon that, because the sense may be plain, If you have any exhortation which is apt and profitable for the people. An exhortation doth not exclude doctrine. But it seemeth that this word was commonly used among them; because it is properly the office of the teacher to utter no new thing of his own brain, but to apply the Scripture, wherein is comprehended the whole wisdom of the godly, unto the present use of the people. Thus, they do not only teach, but also apply the doctrine which they

[1] "Respuenda," rejecting.
[2] "Compositi," arranged.
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have elsewhere, unto the edifying of the Church, which I think is meant by the word *exhortation.*

16. *And Paul rose, and when he had given a token of silence with the hand, he said, Men and brethren, which fear God, hear.*
17. *The God of this people did choose our fathers, and exalted the people, when they were strangers in the land of Egypt; and he brought them thence with an high arm.*
18. *And about forty years he suffered their manners in the wilderness.*
19. *And having destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land for an inheritance.*
20. *After these things, about four hundred and fifty years, he gave them judges, until Samuel the prophet.*
21. *Afterward they required a king, and God gave them Saul, the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, forty years.*
22. *And when he had taken him away, he raised up to them David to be king, of whom bearing witness, he said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man according to my heart, who shall do all my will.*
23. *Of whose seed God, according to promise, raised to Israel the Saviour, Jesus.*

16. We must note the state of this sermon, lest we think that he uttered words in vain. Paul seemeth, indeed, to begin even at the very first beginning, but he speaketh nothing but that which is most convenient for the present purpose. His purpose is to bring the Jews unto the faith of Christ; and that he may the better do this, it is needful to declare that they excel other nations in this one thing, because the Saviour was promised them, whose kingdom is their principal and only felicity. This is, therefore, Paul's beginning, that whereas they were chosen in times past to be the peculiar people of God; whereas they had so many benefits bestowed upon them from time to time, though they showed themselves most unworthy, this did depend upon the promise of the Messiah, and did tend to that end, that God might go-

vern them by the hand of the Messiah; and that therefore they have nothing whereof they may boast, unless they be gathered under their Head; yea, that unless they receive him when he is offered, the covenant of life which God had made with their fathers shall be void, and the adoption shall be frustrate. This is the drift of the first part of the sermon: that this is the principal point of the law and the foundation of God's covenant, that they have Christ for their Captain and Governor, that he may restore all things among them; that without him religion cannot stand, and that they shall be most miserable without him. Thence Paul passeth unto another member, that Jesus, whom he preacheth, is Christ indeed, through whom salvation is offered to the people; also he declareth the means of the redemption purchased by him. Furthermore, he intreateth of his power and office, that they may know what good things they ought to hope for at his hands. The conclusion containeth a chiding; for he threateneth to them horrible judgment, if they refuse the author of salvation, who offereth himself, even of his own accord, whom earnestly to desire the law and prophets provoke. This is, in a manner, the sum; now let us discuss every point by itself.

Men and brethren. Because Paul knew that there were many bastardly sons of Abraham, or such as were grown out of kind,[1] he calleth the Jews to whom he speaketh by a double name. First, he calleth them brethren, having respect unto common kindred, notwithstanding he showeth therewithal that they shall be true Israelites if they fear God, and that even then they are likewise true hearers, because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." In like sort he maketh the faithful attentive, and purchaseth audience among them, as if he should say, Seeing many boast that they are sons of Abraham, who were unworthy of such honour, show yourselves to be no bastardly seed. Let us learn by this that it is not a fault common to one age only, that good and sincere worshippers being mixed with

[1] "Degencree," degenerate.

whilst crafty men transform their wit hither and thither, so that they have in them no simplicity; though the Greek word which Luke useth signifieth ready boldness to do hurt; but the former signification agreeth better. By the *son of the devil* is meant a reprobate and desperate man. Such are all those which resist maliciously, and as it were of set purpose, that which is just and right; therefore Paul addeth, that he is a great *enemy of all righteousness.*

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God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they had John also for their minister.

6. *And when they had passed over the island unto Paphos, they found a certain false prophet, a Jew, named Bar-jesus,*

7. *Who was with Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, a wise man; who, when he had called Barnabas and Paul, sought to hear the word of God.*

8. *And Elymas, the sorcerer, (for so is his name expounded,) resisted them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith.*

9. *And Saul, which was also called Paul, being full of the* [Holy] *Ghost, and looking stedfastly on him,*

10. *Said, O thou that art full of all deceit and wickedness, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, dost thou not cease to pervert the straight ways of the Lord?*

11. *And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And forthwith there fell upon him mist and darkness, and, going about, he sought some to lead him by the hand.*

12. *Then the proconsul, seeing what had happened, he believed, wondering at the doctrine of the Lord.*

4. *Being sent out by the Holy Ghost.* There is no mention made here of the election made by the Church, because it was altogether a divine calling; the Church did only receive those who were offered them by the hand of God. He saith, that they came first to Seleucia, which was a city of Syria. There was, indeed, a country of the same name; but it is more likely that Luke speaketh of the city, which was not far from Cyprus by sea.

5. He saith that they began to preach the gospel first in Salamis, a famous city of Cyprus. Notwithstanding, they seem to begin amiss; for whereas they were sent specially to the Gentiles, they preach the word of God, nevertheless, to the Jews, I answer, that they were not so addicted to the Gentiles, that, setting aside the Jews, it stood them upon to go straight to the Gentiles, for when God did make them teachers of the Gentiles, he did not depose them from the office which they had heretofore [illegible]; so that there was

spiration of the Spirit. Furthermore, it was a very fit kind of punishment. For seeing that the sorcerer essayed to darken the sun, and to take from others the benefit of the light, he was, by good right, cast into horrible darkness.

But now, forasmuch as many of the Papists do far exceed this sorcerer at this day in ungodliness, it is a wonder why they be suffered to be so bold without being punished. Is the hand of God weakened? Is he less careful for his glory? Hath he no care to revenge the gospel? I answer, that this visible punishment which was once laid[1] upon the sorcerer, and such as this, are perpetual examples of God's wrath against all those who are not afraid either to corrupt and deprave, or openly with slanders to resist the pure doctrine of the gospel. For we do know that miracles were wrought for a time to this end, that they may continually be in force, and be fresh before our eyes, and that they may give us light to behold the judgments of God, which we cannot see so plainly; but it is not for us to prescribe God this or that way to punish his enemies. Sergius Paulus, who, before he came to man's estate, had no taste of true religion, who, from his childhood, was infected with divers superstitions, and had very hard lets, which kept him back from embracing the faith; lastly, who was bewitched with the dotings of the sorcerer, that he could scarce come to the faith, had need of no small helps. Hereby it came to pass that God did, as it were, reach his hand out of heaven manifestly, though he helped us all in his person; for the same gospel, the authority whereof was then established, is at this day preached to us, and yet, notwithstanding, God doth not so linger, but that he showeth his fearful power divers ways against the enemies of the gospel, unless our eyes were so dull when he showeth his judgments that we cannot see.

12. *Then when the deputy saw.* This is that which I said,

[1] "Inflicta," inflicted.

that the snares were broken wherein Elymas kept him entangled, for he was brought by the miracle unto faith; because the reverence of doctrine is the beginning of faith, and the preparation. Therefore, forasmuch as he saw an evident token of the power of God, he knew that Paul was sent of God, and so he began to reverence his doctrine, whereof he did doubt before. If God do now miraculously strengthen in the minds of many the faith of the gospel, which is shaken with so many and such strong engines; if he bring to pass, after an incredible manner, that the course of faith doth pass through a thousand lets, being content with this his grace, let us not murmur against him, or reason the matter with him, as if our condition were worse, if he do not daily show such miracles as we would desire.

13. *And when Paul's companions had loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga of Pamphylia; and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.*

14. *Furthermore, when they had passed over the country of Perga, they came to Antioch, a city of Pisidia, and entered into the synagogue upon the day of the Sabbaths, and sat down.*

15. *And after the lecture of the law and prophets, the master of the synagogue sent to them, saying, Men and brethren, if there be in you any word of exhortation unto the people, say on.*

13. Here is set down another of Paul's stations; for, being departed from Paphos, when he came to Antioch of Pisidia, he made there a worthy[1] sermon, which Luke will recite, together with the success; but before he come to that, he doth by the way speak of the departure of John, because it was afterwards a cause of doleful disagreement. When he saith, *Paul's companions loosed from Paphos*, he doth, in the first place, mean Paul himself; secondly, the other, one excepted. So that, by noting his softness, he praiseth others which followed Paul with great[2] constancy.

[1] "Memorabilem," memorable. [2] "Indefatigabili," indefatigable.

14. *Entering, upon the day of the Sabbaths.* He putteth the plural number instead of the singular, as it falleth out oftentimes in other places of Scripture; for they were wont to assemble themselves together upon the Sabbaths, lest their rest should be unprofitable and sluggish. The institution of the Sabbath had another end also, that it might be a figure of the spiritual rest, when as the faithful, being dead to the world and the flesh, abandon their own will, and cease from their works. Because we have the truth hereof in Christ, whilst that being buried together with him we put off the old man; therefore the old figure is past. But God had respect also unto the politic use, that the Jews, being free from all other cares and businesses, might keep their holy assemblies; so that the ceasing off from earthly works did give a place to their heavenly exercises. So, even at this day we must use holy days; for we must therefore omit all other things that we may the more freely serve God.

15. *After the lecture* [reading] *of the law.* There is no mention made of prayers, and yet, undoubtedly, they were not omitted or foreslowed, [neglected;] but because Luke did intend to set down the sermon made there by Paul, no marvel if he reckon up those things only which did belong unto the order of teaching. And this is a notable place, out of which we learn after what sort they handled doctrine at that time among the Jews. The law and the prophets had the first place; because there must nothing be set before the Church which was not drawn out of that fountain. Also we gather by this that the Scripture was not suppressed among a few, but that both one and other[1] were admitted to the reading thereof, afterward those who were able, and had the grace to teach and exhort, had the second place, as interpreters of the Scripture which was read. Notwithstanding Luke showeth, last of all, that every one was not suffered to speak, lest confusion should arise by

[1] "Omnes . . . promiscue," all promiscuously.

liberty; but the office of exhorting was committed to certain men, whom he calleth rulers of the synagogue, or masters. Therefore Paul and Barnabas begin not forthwith to speak, lest they disturb the accustomed order with too much haste; but they do modestly stay till they have liberty granted them to speak, and that with their leave who had authority by public consent. We know how corrupt the state of that people was then; and Luke will at length declare, in the end of the chapter, that these men of Antioch were too stout and stubborn in receiving[1] the grace of Christ; and yet there remained this goodness among them, that their assemblies were honestly and decently governed;[2] for which cause such evil favoured confusion is so much the more shameful which is seen at this day among those who will be counted Christians. The Papists do indeed sing[3] the Scriptures in their churches with shrill and sounding voice, but in an unknown tongue, so that the people reap no fruit thereby. There is seldom any doctrine used; and it were better for the wicked babblers even then to hold their peace, who thrust in their own unclean inventions instead of the Word of God, and pollute with the stink of their impiety whatsoever is holy.

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vern them by the hand of the Messiah; and that therefore they have nothing whereof they may boast, unless they be gathered under their Head; yea, that unless they receive him when he is offered, the covenant of life which God had made with their fathers shall be void, and the adoption shall be frustrate. This is the drift of the first part of the sermon: that this is the principal point of the law and the foundation of God's covenant, that they have Christ for their Captain and Governor, that he may restore all things among them; that without him religion cannot stand, and that they shall be most miserable without him. Thence Paul passeth unto another member, that Jesus, whom he preacheth, is Christ indeed, through whom salvation is offered to the people; also he declareth the means of the redemption purchased by him. Furthermore, he intreateth of his power and office, that they may know what good things they ought to hope for at his hands. The conclusion containeth a chiding; for he threateneth to them horrible judgment, if they refuse the author of salvation, who offereth himself, even of his own accord, whom earnestly to desire the law and prophets provoke. This is, in a manner, the sum; now let us discuss every point by itself.

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[1] "Degencree," degenerate.

hypocrites, have the name of the Church common among them. But we must have a great care hereof, that we be indeed that which we are called; which thing the true fear of Almighty God will bring to pass, and not the external profession alone.

17. *The God of this people.* This preface did witness that Paul did go about no new thing, which might lead away the people from the law of Moses. There is but one God, who is God of all nations; but he calleth him God of that people, to whom he had bound himself, and who was worshipped amongst the posterity of Abraham, amongst whom alone true and pure religion was to be found. To the same end tendeth that which is added immediately, *He chose our fathers.* For he testifieth by these words that he seeketh nothing less[1] than that they may fall away from the true and living God, who hath separated them from the residue of the world. Neither do I doubt but that he did more manifestly express that he did not preach to them an unknown or strange God, but the same who revealed himself long ago to their fathers; so that he doth briefly comprehend the sound knowledge of God, grounded in the law, that their faith, conceived out of the law and prophets, may continue firm.

Notwithstanding, he doth, in the mean season, commend and set forth the free love of God toward that people. For how came it to pass that only the children of Abraham were the Church and inheritance of God, save only because it pleased God to dissever them from other nations? For there was no worthiness to distinguish them; but the difference began at the love of God, wherewith he did freely love Abraham.

Of this free love of God, Moses doth oftentimes put the Jews to mind, as Deut. iv. 7, 8, 10, 14, 32, 34, and in other places; wherein God did set before us a mirror of his wonderful counsel, in that finding no excellence in Abraham,

[1] "Nihil se minus captare," that there is nothing he less desires.

an obscure person and miserable idolater, he doth, notwithstanding, prefer him before all the world. Furthermore, this election was common to all the people, as was also circumcision, whereby God did adopt to himself the seed of Abraham; but there was also a more hidden election, whereby severing to himself a few of many children of Abraham, he did declare, that not all who came of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh are reckoned in the spiritual stock.

He did drive out a people. Paul teacheth that all those benefits which God bestowed afterwards upon the Jews, did proceed and flow from that free favour which he did bear toward their fathers. For this was the cause that they were delivered by the wonderful power of God, and brought by his hand into the possession of the land of Canaan, after that he had driven out so many nations for their sake. For it is no small matter for the land to be deprived of her inhabitants, that she might receive strangers. This is the fountain and root of all good things whereunto Paul calleth us, that God chose the fathers. This was the reason and cause which moved God to so great patience, that he would not cast off that rebellious people, who should otherwise have destroyed themselves a thousand times with their own wickedness. Therefore, where the Scripture maketh mention that their sins were pardoned, it saith that God remembered his covenant. He saith that they were *exalted*, though they were *strangers*, that they may remember how worthy and gorgeous their deliverance was.

18. *He suffered their manners.* The compound verb hath greater force and grace in the Greek, whereby the mercifulness of God is expressed in suffering the people, whom he knew to be stubborn and disobedient. And Paul giveth us to understand again, that the election of God was the cause that his goodness did strive with the wickedness of the people.[1] Notwithstanding, we must note that God did so take pity upon his elect people, whilst that he will con-

[1] "Sustinendo populo," in sustaining the people.

tinue firm in his purpose, that he did, notwithstanding, sharply punish the rebellious and wicked. He spared the people indeed, so that he did not quite destroy them, as he might by good right; but he found also means that their wickedness might not remain unpunished. And so that of Isaiah was fulfilled, "If the multitude shall be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved," (Isaiah x. 22.)

20. *He gave them judges.* Under this name the Scripture comprehendeth rulers and governors; and here is another testimony of the infinite goodness of God toward the Jews, in that he pardoned so many backslidings in them. For it is likely that Paul handled those things more at large, which Luke gathereth briefly. And we know what was the estate of the people during all that time, seeing that through untamed wantonness they did ever now and then shake off the yoke. They were often punished with most grievous plagues, yet so soon as they were once humbled, God delivered them from the tyranny of their enemies. So that he saved the body thereof alive, amidst many deaths, four whole ages and one-half. And hereby it appeareth how unworthy they were of the favour of God, which they did despise and reject so often, unless the constancy of the election had gotten the victory. For how is it that God is never wearied, but that he keepeth promise with those who are truce-breakers an hundred times, save only because turning his eyes toward his Christ, he hath not suffered his covenant, grounded in him, to decay or perish?

21. *Afterward they desired.* And this change was all one as if they would quite and manifestly overthrow the government which he had appointed, whereof God himself complaineth in Samuel, (1 Sam. viii. 5, 7.) But the stability of the election saved them from being punished as such madness did deserve; yea, the wicked and unlawful desire of the people was to God a new and incredible occasion to erect the kingdom whence Christ should afterward come. For how is it that the sceptre came to the

tribe of Judah, save only because the people were desirous to have a king? And assuredly the people dealt wickedly; but God, who knoweth how to use evil things well, turned that offence into safety. Whereas Saul was thrown down from the kingdom, it served to reprove the fault of the people, (1 Sam. xv. 28,) but immediately when the kingdom is established in David's family the prophecy of Jacob was verified, (Gen. xlix. 10.)

22. *I have found David, my servant.* This title was not so much cited in praise of the person, as that Paul might make the Jews more attentive to receive Christ. For the Lord doth testify that his mind was thoroughly set upon David for no light cause, but he commendeth in him some singular thing; and by extolling him so highly, his intent is to lift up the minds of the faithful unto Christ in his person. The place is taken out of the fourscore and ninth Psalm, (Psalm lxxxix. 20.) Only Paul putteth in that which is not there to be found, that David was the son of Isai, [Jesse,] which amplifieth the grace of God. For seeing that Isai [Jesse] was a breeder of cattle, it was a wonderful work of God to take the least of his sons from the sheepfolds, and to place him in the throne of the kingdom. By the word *found*, God meaneth that he had gotten such a man as he would. Not that David had brought to pass by his own travel and industry that he should meet God, being such a one, but the phrase is taken from the common custom of men.

But the question is, Seeing that David fell so grievously, how God giveth testimony of his continual obedience? We may answer two ways; for God had respect rather unto the continual course of his life, than unto every of his particular actions. Secondly, he did thus set him forth, not so much for his own merit as for his Christ's sake. Assuredly he had deserved, by one wicked fact, eternal destruction for him and his, and, so much as in him lay, the way of the blessing of God was shut up, that there might nothing but vipers' seed come of Bathsheba. But that so filthy a fact, in

25. *When John fulfilled his course.* The second member of the testimony, that when John drew near to the end of his course he sent his disciples to Christ; for he had fashioned them before with the rudiment of baptism, and then he sent them to Christ (as they say) from hand to hand. And this interrogation, *Whom do ye think me to be?* is not a question of one that doubteth. For John reproveth and chideth the Jews, because they did falsely give to him the honour of the Messiah. Though it may be read in one text, I am not he whom you take me to be; yet the other reading is more usual, as it hath also greater force to refute the error. Furthermore, his testimony doth deserve greater credit, in that he doth willingly refuse the honour offered him, (which he might have taken to himself, not without commendation,) and doth submit himself to another. There cannot, assuredly, be any suspicion of ambition, or of seeking after honour here, which may discredit his words.

Behold, he cometh; that is, he is about to come, the Hebrew phrase, which is common enough in the New Testament. Whereas he confesseth that he is unworthy to loose the latchets of Christ's shoes, it is a proverbial figure, whereby he abaseth himself so much as he can, lest his greatness darken Christ's glory; for he meant to do that faithfully which was given him in charge, that Christ alone might have the pre-eminence. Therefore he saith, that how great soever he be, yet he is nothing in respect of Christ. For though God's servants have their dignity, yet being compared to Christ, they must all be as nothing, that he alone may excel; as we see all stars vanish away, that they may give place to the brightness of the sun.

26. *Men and brethren.* Paul doth again prick forward the Jews to embrace Christ; for this ought to have raised no small study and attentiveness in their minds, when as they saw [heard] their salvation handled, and that the message of salvation was appointed properly for them. He calleth them *children of Abraham,* not only for honour's sake, but

that they may know that they be heirs of eternal life; and he speaketh them so fair that it might not grieve them to depart from the scribes and priests whom they worshipped, because they must needs receive Christ. Furthermore, we must remember that which I said before, though the gate of the kingdom of heaven were set open to the Gentiles, yet were not the Jews thrown down from their estate; but were counted the first-begotten in God's family; therefore is it that he saith, that salvation was sent to them, because they were first in order; yet because the carnal kindred was of itself of no great importance, and the ungodliness of many brake out, Paul speaketh specially unto the true worshippers of God, signifying that words were but vain, unless the fear of God reign in their hearts, which may receive them, and, receiving them, may foster them. We must note this title of the gospel, that it is called the *word of salvation.* Wherefore, their hardness must needs be great[1] whom it doth not allure with the sweetness that is in it; but though it be such naturally, yet is it made accidentally "the savour of death unto death" to the reprobate, (2 Cor. ii. 16.)

27. *For those which dwelt in Jerusalem, and their rulers, seeing that they knew him not, neither the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day; when they had condemned him, they fulfilled them.*

28. *And when they found no cause of death in him, they desired Pilate that he would crucify him.*

29. *And after that they had fulfilled all things which were written of him, when they had taken him down from the tree, they put him in a tomb.*

30. *But God raised him up from the dead.*

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law might cease; for even the Scripture contained these things, (Isaiah liii. 4, 5; Dan. ix. 26.)

Therefore, the more violently the captains of the people sought to extinguish Christ, they did in very deed prove him to be Christ, and the Lord did wonderfully deceive [frustrate] them, so that their obstinate impiety doth more edify the faith of the godly than destroy it. Of the same sort are almost all offences which lead away weak and inconstant souls from Christ; for if they would thoroughly ponder the whole process of the work of God, there should be matter of confirmation where they faint. Therefore it cometh to pass, for the most part, that[1] we be troubled with offences and stumbling-blocks, because, whilst we behold those things which belong to Christ with purblind eyes,[2] we imagine that to be black which is white; and we see how far Paul is from dissimulation, and how freely[3] he professeth the truth of the matter, that Christ was hated not only of the common sort, but also of the chief chieftains; and that he was not hissed at by a few, but oppressed by the wicked conspiracy of all the people. That was hard and hateful at the first conflict; but Paul opposeth a more strong engine, that God used them against their wills as a touchstone, whereby he might try his Son. Seeing that the gospel standeth in the same state at this day, let us not be ashamed, with Paul, to confess that the proud princes of the world, and those who bear the greatest sway in the Church, are the deadly enemies of Christ, seeing that doth rather turn to Christ's praise than reproach; for by this means is the Scripture fulfilled.

Seeing they knew him not. Though deliberate malice did enforce the rulers to oppress Christ, yet doth Paul truly impute it to ignorance,[4] because otherwise they would never have crucified the Lord of glory, (1 Cor. ii. 8.)

[1] "Nostra socordia," by our sluggishness. [2] "Torvis aut lusciosis," with stern or purblind eyes. [3] "Ingenue," ingenuously. [4] "Sicut alibi, quum dicit, absconditam esse mundi principibus evangelii sapientiam," as elsewhere, when he says, That the wisdom of the gospel was hid from the princes of the world, omitted.

For the malice of the wicked is like to raging madness, and in seeing it doth not see. Undoubtedly, we need not doubt of this, that they were deprived of a sound mind and the light of the Spirit, who were not afraid to fight against God to their own destruction. Again, he hitteth them in the teeth with ignorance of the Scripture; and lest any should object that he speaketh of some dark and unknown manner; he addeth also, that he doth speak of no other prophecies than of those which are read every Sabbath day; as if he should say, that the oracles of Scripture are most plain and known to the most ignorant, and yet they knew them not. Thus doth Paul teach how monstrous their unbelief was, that he may make the hearers loathe it; and by this example are we taught, that although the Lord appears to us by the Scripture, yet all men have not eyes. After that also the blockishness of the nation waxed more gross, as Paul saith elsewhere, that there is a veil put before their face, that they cannot see Moses when he is present, (2 Cor. iii. 15.) In the mean season, we must note that we are recalled to the Scripture, lest the authority of great men deceive us, neither is there any cause why any man, inventing to himself a prejudice according to the wicked meaning of other men, should think that he is acquitted; for Paul exhorteth the men of Antioch to judge out of the Scripture against the visored governors of the Church;[1] for, for this cause is it given, that it may be read; and reading is not appointed in vain by the Lord; but that all godly men may thereby profit and judge what is right.

This they fulfilled. So that we see that not only creatures void of understanding, but even the very devil, and also the wicked, are subject to the power[2] of God, that he may execute by them that which with himself he hath decreed. The same had we in the third and fourth chapters, (Acts iii. 23; Acts iv. 28,) that when the enemies of Christ did most of all rage to destroy him, yet could they not obtain their

[1] "Larvatos Ecclesiæ præsules," pretended prelates of the Church.
[2] "Providentiæ," the providence.

purpose; but rather they brought that to pass with their own hands which God had in his counsel determined; which thing maketh not a little for commendation of God's truth, because he is not only of sufficient power to perform those things which he hath promised; but also those who go about to bring his counsels to nought do their endeavour to establish them, though it be against their will. For how should not the truth of God stand which the chiefest enemies are enforced to fulfil? Yet wisdom is necessary here, lest we join God and Satan together.

For the Jews are not therefore excusable, because they fulfilled the Scriptures; because we must consider their wicked will, and not the event, which they did not look for, yea, which ought to be counted a miracle. If we look into their work by itself, it is quite contrary to God; but as God doth, in the sun and other planets, by wonderful cunning, temper contrary motions, and such as strive among themselves, so he directeth the perverse endeavours of the wicked, by his secret power, unto another end than they thought upon and did desire, lest they should do any thing but that which he would. They, indeed, as touching themselves, do contrary to his will; but it falleth out according to the will of God after an incomprehensible manner. Forasmuch as this course is contrary to nature, no marvel if the wisdom of the flesh see it not. Therefore, it must be discerned with the eye of faith, or rather it must be reverenced; and those dogs who bark against it must be despised with their wantonness.[1]

28. *When as they found no cause of death.* It was very pertinent to the matter that they should know that Christ was put to death guiltless, for we could not have been justified by his death, if he had suffered death for his own evil deeds; therefore it was requisite that he should be guiltless, that his death might be a satisfaction for the sins of the world. And, undoubtedly, I think that Paul did plainly

[1] "Petulantia," petulance.

declare that Pilate condemned Christ, not according to the office of a judge, but that he consented that he should be put to death after that he was overcome with the ungodly requests of the people; and also that the Jews were driven by lust, and not enforced by reason, to desire Christ's death. For it stood him upon to terrify the hearers, that they might not couple themselves[1] to so wicked a fact. But Luke doth now in few words set down, after his common custom, those things which Paul did then more at large declare.

29. *When they had fulfilled all things;* to wit, which it pleased God should be done by them. For they did so handle Christ, that there was nothing of the prophecies of the Scripture left unfulfilled. By this means is the stumbling-block (which the understanding of the flesh conceiveth by reason of the ignominy of the cross) taken away, that the Son of God was not laid open to the furious fury of the wicked; but he obeyed his Father's decree. Furthermore, it doth also in Scripture appear what condition was appointed for him in times past. Whereas he saith that Christ was buried by the same which had slain him, it seemeth contrary to the history of the gospel; but it may be that Luke did take the word *buried* indefinitely. And if it please you to refer it unto the same, it shall be *synecdoche.* For he was buried with Pilate's leave; and at the appointment and pleasure of the priests there were watchmen set to watch the grave. Therefore, though Joseph and Nicodemus did bury Christ, (Matth. xxvii. 57,) that is ascribed improperly, and yet not absurdly, to the Jews; because it is not Paul's drift in this place to commend the good deed, but to prove Christ's resurrection; because God took him out of the grave whom his enemies had shut up there. Therefore he giveth us to understand that the body of Christ was not taken thence privily or by stealth, but that it was laid in a place both famous and known to the adversaries; and so, consequently, that even they were set to watch it; and yet for all

[1] "Se adjungerent socios," join themselves as associates.

purpose; but rather they brought that to pass with their own hands which God had in his counsel determined; which thing maketh not a little for commendation of God's truth, because he is not only of sufficient power to perform those things which he hath promised; but also those who go about to bring his counsels to nought do their endeavour to establish them, though it be against their will. For how should not the truth of God stand which the chiefest enemies are enforced to fulfil? Yet wisdom is necessary here, lest we join God and Satan together.

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this it was not found: whence we may gather the certainty of the resurrection.

30. *God hath raised him up.* The death of Christ was the salvation of the godly, yet joined with the resurrection; therefore doth Paul stand longer upon this second point. For he should never have persuaded his hearers that they were to seek salvation in Christ's death, unless the power of Almighty God had appeared in raising Christ from death.

31. After that he hath said that Christ came out of the grave, which was beset with the hired ministers of the adversaries, he addeth now that he appeared to many of the disciples, which bare faithful witness to the people. And he calleth them *witnesses*, either in respect of their office; because they were chosen for this purpose, as we have already said in the first chapter, (Acts i. 8;) or else declaring simply that they professed openly and freely that which they knew concerning Christ. Whereupon it followeth that the matter was made known openly[1] at Jerusalem. And the proof was not so light; because, in the fearful power of the enemies, who were ready and bent to resist, and did omit nothing, there were, notwithstanding, such as did openly affirm that Christ rose again, and were also such as saw that thing with their eyes; for if there had been any refutation in readiness, the scribes would not have neglected it.

32. *And we preach to you glad tidings, that the promise made to the fathers,*
33. *Hath God fulfilled to their children: having raised up Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*
34. *And in that he hath raised him up from the dead, not to return hereafter to corruption, he hath said thus, I will give you the holy things of David.*
35. *Therefore he saith also in another place, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

[1] "Probe fuisse testatem," was well attested

36. *David, indeed, when he had served his time, by the counsel of God he fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.*
37. *But he whom God raised saw no corruption.*

32. *We preach to you glad tidings.* He doth now challenge to himself the office and honour of an apostle, that he may be heard as a lawful minister of God. And he saith the sum of the embassage enjoined him is, that that is revealed and given in their time which was promised in times past. And in few words doth he comprehend many and great matters. First, he giveth them to understand that he bringeth in nothing which is new, or contrary to the law and prophets, but that he did reveal the fulfilling of that doctrine which they themselves did confess, and were persuaded to have been delivered by God. Whereupon it followeth that they cannot refuse that which he offereth them, but they shall break the covenant made with the fathers by God, so much as in them shall lie; secondly, he commendeth the faithfulness of God, because it doth now in very deed appear that there was nothing promised in times past unadvisedly or in vain; but he doth chiefly extol the greatness of the grace given at length in Christ. For we must note the comparison between them and the fathers, when he saith, that they had gotten that which was promised to the fathers. For the more liberally the grace of God is poured out upon them, the more filthy shall their unthankfulness be, if they shall despise or loathe that inestimable good thing. For what else were this, but to cast down at their feet a treasure even reached out to them, that they might take hold thereof, and so consequently laid in their lap, the hope whereof was reverently embraced by the fathers, when it was showed them afar off, and which they did foster[1] during their whole life.

But some man may ask this question concerning those who lived under the law, whether even they were not made partakers of the promises? I answer, that there is such a

[1] "Patienter foverint," patiently foster.

think me to be? I am not. But, behold, he cometh after me whose shoe latchets I am not worthy to loose.

26. *Men and brethren, children of the generation of Abraham, and those who among you fear God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.*

24. We know what office John had, to wit, to prepare the way of the Lord. Therefore Paul bringeth in his testimony, that he may prove to the Jews that he preached no false Christ, but the true Christ of God, whom that most famous forerunner had before commended; not that man's testimony is sufficient to prove so weighty a matter; but there was another respect to be had to John whom all men almost did think to be a prophet of God. Therefore hence cometh the authority of the testimony, that a crier sent from heaven, and no private man, speaketh of Christ. And Paul reciteth two things summarily concerning John, that he taught the baptism of repentance before Christ's coming. Secondly, that casting from him of his own accord the title and honour of the Messiah, he submitted himself to Christ.

The baptism of repentance. Baptism brought in contrary to the rite and custom of the law was a token of great alteration. For it was unlawful to renew anything before Christ's coming. The Jews had indeed in the law their baptisms or washings, which were also exercises of repentance, but John was the author of new and strange baptism, or rather the minister, who put them in hope of the restoring long looked-for and desired. When he calleth it *the baptism of repentance*, he doth not exclude remission of sins, but he speaketh according to the circumstance of the place, because this baptism was a preparation unto the faith of Christ. And we must note the phrase, that he preached baptism. Whereby we are taught that the sacraments are then rightly administered, when doctrine is joined with the visible figure; for the mouth of the baptizer must not be dumb, because the sign is vain without doctrine.

great multitude only a few are counted children. And that is the double election whereof I spake before. The one common to the whole nation alike; because the first adoption of God containeth the whole family of Abraham. The other, which is restrained unto the secret counsel of God, and is at length established by faith, that it may be confirmed to men.

Therefore Paul doth well and truly affirm that that was performed to the Jews which God had promised to the fathers. For it was promised to them also, as Zacharias saith in his song, "The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would give himself for us," &c. And yet the worthiness of that nation doth not hinder but that the grace of Christ may also spread itself throughout the whole world; because the first-begotten hath the first degree of honour, so that he doth, notwithstanding, leave the second place to his brethren. For in that after the old people were cast off, the possession of the church was left empty for strangers, it began to be a new occasion of gathering the Church of the Gentiles; but and if that people had stood in the faith, the Gentiles had been joined into the common society of honour.

After that he had raised Christ. The word *raised*, in my judgment, reacheth farther than it doth where it is shortly after repeated. For he doth not only say that Christ rose from the dead, but that he was appointed of God, and, as it were, brought to light by the hand of God, that he might fulfil the office of the Messiah, as the Scripture teacheth everywhere that kings and prophets are raised up.[1] For the word αναστησαι is sometimes taken in this sense: And this reason moveth me thus to think, because God, by sending his Son into the world, did fulfil his promise made to his servants in times past, by the effect itself.

Likeas, in the second Psalm. Though the Greek books[2] agree in the number, yet we must not pass over that which Erasmus saith, that many of the old writers read the *first*

[1] "A Domino," by the Lord, omitted. [2] "Codices," manuscripts.

that they may know that they be heirs of eternal life; and he speaketh them so fair that it might not grieve them to depart from the scribes and priests whom they worshipped, because they must needs receive Christ. Furthermore, we must remember that which I said before, though the gate of the kingdom of heaven were set open to the Gentiles, yet were not the Jews thrown down from their estate; but were counted the first-begotten in God's family; therefore is it that he saith, that salvation was sent to them, because they were first in order; yet because the carnal kindred was of itself of no great importance, and the ungodliness of many brake out, Paul speaketh specially unto the true worshippers of God, signifying that words were but vain, unless the fear of God reign in their hearts, which may receive them, and, receiving them, may foster them. We must note this title of the gospel, that it is called the *word of salvation.* Wherefore, their hardness must needs be great[1] whom it doth not allure with the sweetness that is in it; but though it be such naturally, yet is it made accidentally "the savour of death unto death" to the reprobate, (2 Cor. ii. 16.)

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27. He doth wisely, and in due time, prevent an offence which might have been a great hinderance to their faith,

[1] "Plusquam ferrea," more than that of iron.

[men's faith.] For Jerusalem was God's sanctuary, the king's seat, the fountain of truth, and the light of the whole world; but Christ was put to death there. Furthermore, nothing could seem more absurd to look to than to receive him who was cast out of the temple of God; and to seek the doctrine of salvation any where else than there whence God himself had testified it should come. Moreover, by believing in Christ, they seemed to make a departure from the Church; and, therefore, this one objection was strong enough to refute all Paul's sermon, Why dost thou force upon us, under colour of God's covenant, a man whom the principal part of the holy people condemned? This objection doth Paul answer, lest it hinder the course of the gospel; and not that only, but he turneth it also to the contrary part; for seeing that the author of life was despised and rejected at Jerusalem, Paul exhorteth the men of Antioch, at least those who among them feared God, that they receive him so much the more joyfully; for this doth the causal word declare, as if he should have said, Seeing that Jerusalem knew not her good, it behoveth you to be the more awakened and inflamed, lest the same unthankfulness and frowardness be found in you.

But he useth another reason to remove the offence, to wit, that their ungodliness was so far from diminishing any whit of Christ's divine excellency, that it ought rather to serve to prove and establish the same, for whereby doth Christ better appear than because all that was fulfilled in him which had been foretold in the law and prophets? (Luke xxiv. 25, 26.) Furthermore, what got the enemies of Christ, save only that in him shined the plain truth of the Scripture? It must needs be that Christ should be rejected of the chief, for it was so foretold, "The stone which the builders refused hath God made the head of the corner," (Psalm cxviii. 22.) Christ must needs have been condemned among the wicked, that he might acquit us before God; it was expedient that sins should be laid upon him, that he might make satisfaction for the same; that he should be offered upon the cross, that the shadowish sacrifices of the

law might cease; for even the Scripture contained these things, (Isaiah liii. 4, 5; Dan. ix. 26.)

Therefore, the more violently the captains of the people sought to extinguish Christ, they did in very deed prove him to be Christ, and the Lord did wonderfully deceive [frustrate] them, so that their obstinate impiety doth more edify the faith of the godly than destroy it. Of the same sort are almost all offences which lead away weak and inconstant souls from Christ; for if they would thoroughly ponder the whole process of the work of God, there should be matter of confirmation where they faint. Therefore it cometh to pass, for the most part, that[1] we be troubled with offences and stumbling-blocks, because, whilst we behold those things which belong to Christ with purblind eyes,[2] we imagine that to be black which is white; and we see how far Paul is from dissimulation, and how freely[3] he professeth the truth of the matter, that Christ was hated not only of the common sort, but also of the chief chieftains; and that he was not hissed at by a few, but oppressed by the wicked conspiracy of all the people. That was hard and hateful at the first conflict; but Paul opposeth a more strong engine, that God used them against their wills as a touchstone, whereby he might try his Son. Seeing that the gospel standeth in the same state at this day, let us not be ashamed, with Paul, to confess that the proud princes of the world, and those who bear the greatest sway in the Church, are the deadly enemies of Christ, seeing that doth rather turn to Christ's praise than reproach; for by this means is the Scripture fulfilled.

Seeing they knew him not. Though deliberate malice did enforce the rulers to oppress Christ, yet doth Paul truly impute it to ignorance,[4] because otherwise they would never have crucified the Lord of glory, (1 Cor. ii. 8.)

[1] "Nostra socordia," by our sluggishness. [2] "Torvis aut lusciosis," with stern or purblind eyes. [3] "Ingenue," ingenuously. [4] "Sicut alibi, quum dicit, absconditam esse mundi principibus evangelii sapientiam," as elsewhere, when he says, That the wisdom of the gospel was hid from the princes of the world, omitted.

For the malice of the wicked is like to raging madness, and in seeing it doth not see. Undoubtedly, we need not doubt of this, that they were deprived of a sound mind and the light of the Spirit, who were not afraid to fight against God to their own destruction. Again, he hitteth them in the teeth with ignorance of the Scripture; and lest any should object that he speaketh of some dark and unknown manner; he addeth also, that he doth speak of no other prophecies than of those which are read every Sabbath day; as if he should say, that the oracles of Scripture are most plain and known to the most ignorant, and yet they knew them not. Thus doth Paul teach how monstrous their unbelief was, that he may make the hearers loathe it; and by this example are we taught, that although the Lord appears to us by the Scripture, yet all men have not eyes. After that also the blockishness of the nation waxed more gross, as Paul saith elsewhere, that there is a veil put before their face, that they cannot see Moses when he is present, (2 Cor. iii. 15.) In the mean season, we must note that we are recalled to the Scripture, lest the authority of great men deceive us, neither is there any cause why any man, inventing to himself a prejudice according to the wicked meaning of other men, should think that he is acquitted; for Paul exhorteth the men of Antioch to judge out of the Scripture against the visored governors of the Church;[1] for, for this cause is it given, that it may be read; and reading is not appointed in vain by the Lord; but that all godly men may thereby profit and judge what is right.

This they fulfilled. So that we see that not only creatures void of understanding, but even the very devil, and also the wicked, are subject to the power[2] of God, that he may execute by them that which with himself he hath decreed. The same had we in the third and fourth chapters, (Acts iii. 23; Acts iv. 28,) that when the enemies of Christ did most of all rage to destroy him, yet could they not obtain their

[1] "Larvatos Ecclesiæ præsules," pretended prelates of the Church.
[2] "Providentiæ," the providence.

purpose; but rather they brought that to pass with their own hands which God had in his counsel determined; which thing maketh not a little for commendation of God's truth, because he is not only of sufficient power to perform those things which he hath promised; but also those who go about to bring his counsels to nought do their endeavour to establish them, though it be against their will. For how should not the truth of God stand which the chiefest enemies are enforced to fulfil? Yet wisdom is necessary here, lest we join God and Satan together.

For the Jews are not therefore excusable, because they fulfilled the Scriptures; because we must consider their wicked will, and not the event, which they did not look for, yea, which ought to be counted a miracle. If we look into their work by itself, it is quite contrary to God; but as God doth, in the sun and other planets, by wonderful cunning, temper contrary motions, and such as strive among themselves, so he directeth the perverse endeavours of the wicked, by his secret power, unto another end than they thought upon and did desire, lest they should do any thing but that which he would. They, indeed, as touching themselves, do contrary to his will; but it falleth out according to the will of God after an incomprehensible manner. Forasmuch as this course is contrary to nature, no marvel if the wisdom of the flesh see it not. Therefore, it must be discerned with the eye of faith, or rather it must be reverenced; and those dogs who bark against it must be despised with their wantonness.[1]

28. *When as they found no cause of death.* It was very pertinent to the matter that they should know that Christ was put to death guiltless, for we could not have been justified by his death, if he had suffered death for his own evil deeds; therefore it was requisite that he should be guiltless, that his death might be a satisfaction for the sins of the world. And, undoubtedly, I think that Paul did plainly

[1] "Petulantia," petulance.

declare that Pilate condemned Christ, not according to the office of a judge, but that he consented that he should be put to death after that he was overcome with the ungodly requests of the people; and also that the Jews were driven by lust, and not enforced by reason, to desire Christ's death. For it stood him upon to terrify the hearers, that they might not couple themselves[1] to so wicked a fact. But Luke doth now in few words set down, after his common custom, those things which Paul did then more at large declare.

29. *When they had fulfilled all things;* to wit, which it pleased God should be done by them. For they did so handle Christ, that there was nothing of the prophecies of the Scripture left unfulfilled. By this means is the stumbling-block (which the understanding of the flesh conceiveth by reason of the ignominy of the cross) taken away, that the Son of God was not laid open to the furious fury of the wicked; but he obeyed his Father's decree. Furthermore, it doth also in Scripture appear what condition was appointed for him in times past. Whereas he saith that Christ was buried by the same which had slain him, it seemeth contrary to the history of the gospel; but it may be that Luke did take the word *buried* indefinitely. And if it please you to refer it unto the same, it shall be *synecdoche.* For he was buried with Pilate's leave; and at the appointment and pleasure of the priests there were watchmen set to watch the grave. Therefore, though Joseph and Nicodemus did bury Christ, (Matth. xxvii. 57,) that is ascribed improperly, and yet not absurdly, to the Jews; because it is not Paul's drift in this place to commend the good deed, but to prove Christ's resurrection; because God took him out of the grave whom his enemies had shut up there. Therefore he giveth us to understand that the body of Christ was not taken thence privily or by stealth, but that it was laid in a place both famous and known to the adversaries; and so, consequently, that even they were set to watch it; and yet for all

[1] "Se adjungerent socios," join themselves as associates.

this it was not found: whence we may gather the certainty of the resurrection.

30. *God hath raised him up.* The death of Christ was the salvation of the godly, yet joined with the resurrection; therefore doth Paul stand longer upon this second point. For he should never have persuaded his hearers that they were to seek salvation in Christ's death, unless the power of Almighty God had appeared in raising Christ from death.

31. After that he hath said that Christ came out of the grave, which was beset with the hired ministers of the adversaries, he addeth now that he appeared to many of the disciples, which bare faithful witness to the people. And he calleth them *witnesses*, either in respect of their office; because they were chosen for this purpose, as we have already said in the first chapter, (Acts i. 8;) or else declaring simply that they professed openly and freely that which they knew concerning Christ. Whereupon it followeth that the matter was made known openly[1] at Jerusalem. And the proof was not so light; because, in the fearful power of the enemies, who were ready and bent to resist, and did omit nothing, there were, notwithstanding, such as did openly affirm that Christ rose again, and were also such as saw that thing with their eyes; for if there had been any refutation in readiness, the scribes would not have neglected it.

32. *And we preach to you glad tidings, that the promise made to the fathers,*
33. *Hath God fulfilled to their children: having raised up Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*
34. *And in that he hath raised him up from the dead, not to return hereafter to corruption, he hath said thus, I will give you the holy things of David.*
35. *Therefore he saith also in another place, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

[1] "Probe fuisse testatem," was well attested.

36. *David, indeed, when he had served his time, by the counsel of God he fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.*
37. *But he whom God raised saw no corruption.*

32. *We preach to you glad tidings.* He doth now challenge to himself the office and honour of an apostle, that he may be heard as a lawful minister of God. And he saith the sum of the embassage enjoined him is, that that is revealed and given in their time which was promised in times past. And in few words doth he comprehend many and great matters. First, he giveth them to understand that he bringeth in nothing which is new, or contrary to the law and prophets, but that he did reveal the fulfilling of that doctrine which they themselves did confess, and were persuaded to have been delivered by God. Whereupon it followeth that they cannot refuse that which he offereth them, but they shall break the covenant made with the fathers by God, so much as in them shall lie; secondly, he commendeth the faithfulness of God, because it doth now in very deed appear that there was nothing promised in times past unadvisedly or in vain; but he doth chiefly extol the greatness of the grace given at length in Christ. For we must note the comparison between them and the fathers, when he saith, that they had gotten that which was promised to the fathers. For the more liberally the grace of God is poured out upon them, the more filthy shall their unthankfulness be, if they shall despise or loathe that inestimable good thing. For what else were this, but to cast down at their feet a treasure even reached out to them, that they might take hold thereof, and so consequently laid in their lap, the hope whereof was reverently embraced by the fathers, when it was showed them afar off, and which they did foster[1] during their whole life.

But some man may ask this question concerning those who lived under the law, whether even they were not made partakers of the promises? I answer, that there is such a

[1] "Patienter foverint," patiently foster.

briefly to collect[1] the sum of those things which he then taught in just and due order. His meaning is, that the Mediator took away that let from the Jews wherein they did stick. The ceremonial law ought indeed to have been a schoolmaster to lead them by the hand unto Christ; all rites commanded by God were helps to help and further their faith; but as men use preposterously to corrupt the holy ordinances of God, they stop the way before themselves by their ceremonies, and they shut the gate of faith, that they could not come to Christ. They thought they had righteousness in sacrifices; that by washings was gotten true cleanness; that God was pleased with them so soon as they had ended their external pomp: in sum, forsaking the body, they laid hold upon vain shadows. God did indeed appoint no unprofitable or vain thing in the law; wherefore ceremonies were sure and undoubted testimonies of remission of sins. For God did not lie in these words, Let the sinner do sacrifice, and his iniquity shall be purged. But as Christ was the end of the law, and the heavenly pattern of the tabernacle, so the force and effect of all ceremonies did depend upon him; whereby it is proved that they were vain shadows, when he was set aside, (Heb. viii. 5.) Now we see Paul's drift and purpose; to wit, that he meant to draw away the Jews from the false and perverse confidence which they reposed in the law; lest being puffed up, they should think that they had no need of Christ's help, or lest they should seek only external felicity in him.

Be justified in the law. This place doth plainly show what the word *justified* doth import in all other places where it is used; to wit, to be delivered and acquitted. There was mention made of remission of sins; Paul affirmeth that there is no other way whereby we can obtain the same but the grace of Christ. Lest any man should object that there be remedies to be found in the law, he answereth that there was in them no force. Therefore the sense is plain, that they cannot be justified from sin in the law,

[1] "Perstringere," glance at.

because the rites of the law were neither just nor lawful prices to remove guiltiness; they were nothing worth of themselves to deserve righteousness, neither were they sufficient recompences to appease God. Certainly, it cannot be denied (but wickedly) that that justification annexed to remission of sins is, as it were, the means and way to obtain the same. For what else doth Paul go about but to confirm that saying, that our sins are forgiven us through the benefit of Christ, by answering contrary objections? And he proveth it, because neither satisfactions, neither all the rites of the law, can justify us from sin. Therefore he is justified by Christ, who is freely loosed from the guilt and judgment of eternal death to which he was subject. This is the righteousness of faith, whilst that God counteth us just, by not imputing our sins.

This only propriety of the word is sufficient to refute the cavils of the Papists, who hold that we are not justified by pardon or by free accepting, but by habit and infused righteousness. Therefore, let us not suffer them to rend in pieces unworthily and wickedly this text of Paul, when he saith that they are justified from all things, that we may be assured of remission of sins. And now we must know that the law of Moses is set against Christ, as the principal mean to obtain righteousness, if there had been any besides Christ. Paul disputeth, indeed, of ceremonies; but we must note that there was nothing omitted in them which might serve to purge sins and to appease God. Yet there was not one of all the ceremonies of the law which did not make man guilty, as a new handwriting; as Paul teacheth, Col. ii. 14. What then? Assuredly God meant to testify that men are justified by the death of his Son alone, because he made him sin for us who did [knew] no sin, that we might have righteousness in him, (2 Cor. v. 21.) Whereupon it followeth that whatsoever satisfactions are invented by men, they tend to rob Christ of his honour. *In the law* and *in Christ* signify as much as *by the law* and *by Christ*, according to the Hebrew phrase.

From all things. By this member is refuted the wicked

invention of the Papists, who teach that only original sin and actual sins committed before baptism are clearly and freely forgiven by Christ, and that others are redeemed by satisfactions. But Paul saith plainly that we are justified from sins by Christ throughout the whole course of our life. For we must remember that the ceremonies [rites] of the law were committed to the Jews, that as well the profit as the use thereof might flourish daily in the Church; that is, that the Jews might indeed understand that their sacrifices and washings were not continually reiterated in vain. If the truth and substance of them be found in Christ, it followeth that there is no other satisfaction or sacrifice to put away sins but his death; otherwise there should be no analogy or proportion between this and the old figures. The Papists call us back unto repentance and the keys, as if the ceremonies of the law were not exercises to think upon repentance, and as if the power of the keys were not annexed unto them. But the faith of the godly was holpen by such helps, that they might fly unto the grace of the Mediator alone. Therefore, let this remain sure and certain that the righteousness which we have in Christ is not for one day or a moment, but it is everlasting, as the sacrifice of his death doth daily reconcile us to God.

39. *Every one that believeth.* Paul showeth how men obtain the righteousness of Christ; to wit, when they receive it by faith; and that which faith doth obtain is not obtained by any merits of works. Wherefore, Paul's opinion is plain, that we are justified by faith alone, which, notwithstanding the Papists oppugn [oppose] and strive against no less obstinately than bitterly, nevertheless, it is requisite that we know what the word *believe* doth import, which is made unsavoury to the Papists through ignorance. There be also other benefits of Christ which we reap by faith; for when he regenerateth us by his Spirit, he restoreth in us the image of God; and after that the old man is crucified he fashioneth us unto newness of life. But it was enough for Luke to express this one thing, how men

return into favour with God, from whom they be estranged by sin, because we may easily pass thence unto the residue.

40. *Take heed that that come not upon you.* Because he had to do with stiff-necked men, or at least there were divers in the company which were stiff-necked, (as if he meant with a hammer to soften their stubbornness,) he addeth a chiding unto doctrine. For if the Jews had been obedient and willing to obey, undoubtedly he would have sought sweetly to allure them unto Christ. But it was either their sluggishness, or else their wilfulness, that caused him to be more angry; like as all those must be cited to appear before God's judgment-seat who contemn the grace of Christ, and the horrible judgment of eternal death must be denounced to those. He signifieth, indeed, that there is yet place left for repentance, when he willeth[1] them to take heed; yet, notwithstanding, he telleth them therewithal, that unless they beware in time, the horrible vengeance of God is not far off.

Which is said in the prophets. The place which is cited is taken out of the first chapter of Habakkuk, (Habak. i. 5;) but because all prophecies were gathered into one volume or body, Paul saith that it is written in the prophets.

41. And yet he doth not recite word for word the words of Habakkuk, which go thus, "Behold, ye Gentiles, and see and wonder, and be astonished; because a work shall be done in your days which no man shall believe when it shall be told him." Paul saith, "Behold, ye despisers," that the Jews may know that the vengeance which was once brought upon their fathers is common to the despisers of the word; as if he should say, God doth at this day make no less account of his word, the contempt whereof he did once punish so sharply. Therefore, the prophet's denunciation doth appertain unto all ages, so that the despisers cannot hope that they can escape that vengeance now whereof

[1] "Hortatur," exhorteth.

others have tasted. They boasted of the temple; they vaunted that they were the people of God; being puffed up with wicked pride, they despised all threatenings. Therefore Paul putteth them in mind of that which God by his prophets doth threaten to the despisers.

A work in your days. The sense is. Those who refuse to believe the word of God shall feel his hand, that being at length with plagues convicted, they may know that he spake in earnest. It is a common proverb, that experience is the mistress of fools. So the Lord doth indeed punish the wicked,[1] that being tamed with miseries, they may begin to confess his power. And what manner [of] punishment doth he denounce? Because you (saith he) do not believe my word, I will show an example among you which no man will believe; by which words he meaneth, that he will punish them, so that the world shall be afraid to see it. For as rebellion against God is a detestable monster, so it is no marvel if of itself it beget monsters of punishments. Therefore, we must beware, lest, if we cease to give credence to God's word, we feel his hand more mighty than all our senses do comprehend, and even unto the astonying [astonishment] of all the whole world; and lest even we be made astonied through fear. Habakkuk prophesieth of the destruction brought upon them by the Chaldeans; but the punishment whereby God revenged the contempt of his gospel was more cruel, [severe.] Therefore, let us accustom ourselves to fear God and reverently embrace his word, lest some such things befal us.

42. *And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles exhorted them that they would speak to them words between the Sabbaths.*[2]

43. *And when the synagogue was dissolved, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, talking with them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.*

[1] "Re ipsa impios coarguit," convicts the wicked by the reality.
[2] "Intermedio Sabbatho," in the interval between the Sabbaths.

44. *And when the Sabbath was come, almost the whole city was gathered to hear the word of God.*
45. *And when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with indignation, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contrarying* [contradicting] *them, and blaspheming them.*

42. *When they were gone out of the synagogue.* It may be also read, out of the synagogue of the Jews, and peradventure more fitly. For it is likely that they were gone out before the multitude was dispersed; and that is gathered out of the text, because Luke saith shortly after, that when the synagogue was dissolved certain of the Jews did follow Paul and Barnabas. Therefore, the sense is, that Paul and Barnabas went out whilst the Jews were yet assembled, and that they were then requested by the Gentiles to take some pains with them in the mean season.

43. And that afterward there came certain of the Jews and proselytes to Paul, being both desirous to learn, and also that they might make profession of their faith. When as the old interpreter and Erasmus did translate it *the Sabbath following*, they did not understand Luke's meaning. For seeing that he intreateth in this place of the Gentiles, I do not think that they choose a Sabbath wherein they may hear Paul and Barnabas. For that day was appointed for the Jews, but the Gentiles had no less opportunity upon other days. Therefore, to what end should they defer their desire and prayers until the eighth day? Yea, rather they covet to hear Paul whilst he is at leisure, and is not occupied in teaching the Jews. So that the Lord doth not suffer them to be idle until the Sabbath come, offering unto them matter in the Gentiles, wherein they may exercise themselves.

42. *They would speak words.* I have translated it as it is in Luke, though the article τα may be taken for τα αυτα, as in some other places. Then the sense should be, that they

were requested that they would that week intreat of the same things before the Gentiles. Furthermore, whilst that the Gentiles do snatch greedily at every first opportunity, the Jews being quiet,[1] do neglect that which is set before them; only that certain of them join themselves to Paul and Barnabas. Luke expresseth the proselytes by name, who seeing they had embraced the doctrine of the law, and did worship the God of Israel, were not puffed up with that pride which hindered the Jews, who made boast of their long stock and race.

43. *Who speaking.* The sense is doubtful. For it may be referred unto the Jews and proselytes, that they exhorted Paul and Barnabas that they should not faint, but stand stoutly in the grace of God. Neither did they want occasion; for they saw combats prepared for them; and that therefore they had need of invincible constancy to suffer and abide the brunts of the contrary faction. Wherefore that might very well agree, that being inflamed with a desire to go forward, they sought to encourage Paul and Barnabas to hold on. If you refer it unto Paul and Barnabas, the sense shall be this, that they did not reject those which came, but they entertained them courteously and gently, and confirmed and strengthened them, that they might persist in the grace which they had received. And this word *grace* doth first comprehend the faith of the gospel; secondly, those good things which come thence to us; or, that I may speak more briefly, the calling into the hope of eternal salvation.

44. *And when the Sabbath came.* The great assembly of the people doth prove that Paul and Barnabas loitered not between the Sabbaths, and they did not take pains with the Gentiles in vain; for the studies and desires of the people had been so prepared, that they all desired to know the whole matter more surely, which they did hope would be, if

[1] "Fastidio pleni," being full of disdain.

it should be discussed among the Jews. For we may guess that though they were allured with some sweet taste, yet were they not as yet thoroughly persuaded to receive the doctrine of the gospel without doubting,[1] but that they came into the synagogue in a quandary,[2] between hope and desire.

45. *They were filled.* It is no new matter for the rage of the wicked to be inflamed when the light of the gospel is set somewhat nearer; especially when they see the increase of sound doctrine, they break out with greater violence to resist. And it is to be doubted whether Luke do mean, by the word *zeal*, that they were moved with a certain wicked indignation, to set themselves against Paul and Barnabas, as ambition is the mother as well of envy as of all contention; or he take *zeal* for *indignation* conceived thereupon, because they did lament that the Gentiles were made equal with the people of God. For they counted this a very unmeet thing, that the holy treasure of doctrine, which was the proper inheritance of the children, should lie, as it were, at all men's feet.

Gainsaying and blaspheming. They were so sore set upon resisting, that they brake out at length into blasphemy. And Satan doth for the most part drive the wicked unto such madness, that when they be overcome with reasons and discouraged, they wax harder and harder; and wittingly and willingly they spew out at length blasphemies against God and the truth. Wherefore we must take so much the more heed when as the truth of God is plainly set before us, lest, if we be carried away with a desire to speak against it, we fall straightway into that steep down.[3]

46. *And when Paul and Barnabas had taken liberty,* [or boldness,] *they said, It was necessary that we should first preach the word of God to you. And after that ye reject*

[1] "Sine controversia," without controversy. [2] "Suspensi," suspended.
[3] "In illud præcipitium ruamus," we rush instantly over that precipice.

it, and do not judge yourselves worthy of eternal life, behold, we turn unto the Gentiles.

47. *For thus hath the Lord commanded us: I have made thee a light of the Gentiles, that thou mayest be the salvation unto the end of the earth.*

48. *And when the Gentiles heard, they rejoiced, and glorified the word of the Lord; and they believed, as many as were ordained unto eternal life.*

49. *And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout the whole region.*

50. *And the Jews stirred certain religious and honest women, and the chief men of the city, and they raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.*

51. *And they shaked off the dust of their feet against them, and came to Iconium.*

52. *And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.*

46. *When they had taken liberty.* Luke showeth that the servants of Christ were so far from being discouraged with the stubbornness of the enemies, that they began, therefore, to inveigh against them afresh more freely. For though they had sharply pricked them, yet they did yet spare them a little; but now, when they see Christ obstinately rejected by them, they[1] excommunicate them and deprive them of the kingdom of God. And by this example are we taught that we must not use extreme severity, save only against those who are quite past hope. And the more bold the reprobate are to oppress the truth, the more courage ought we to take to ourselves. For the servants of God must be armed with invincible constancy of the Spirit, that they may never give place to the devil, nor to his ministers; as the Lord commandeth Jeremiah to encounter with the reprobate with a face of iron.

It was necessary. He accuseth them of unthankfulness, because, whereas they were chosen by God out of all people,

[1] "Vicissim," in their turn.

that Christ might offer himself unto them, they refuse so great a benefit maliciously. And in the former member he setteth down the degree of honour and excellency whereunto God had exalted them; afterward followeth the upbraiding, because they do willingly cast from them so great grace; whereupon he concludeth that it is now time that the gospel be translated unto the Gentiles. In that he saith, that *it was meet that it should first be preached to them*, it doth properly appertain unto the time of Christ's kingdom. For under the law, before Christ was given, the Jews were not only the first, but alone. Therefore was it that Moses called them a priestly kingdom, and the peculiar people of God, (Exod. xix. 5, 6.) But the adoption of God rested then with them alone upon this condition, (the Gentiles being omitted,) that they should be preferred as yet before the Gentiles by the coming of Christ. For though Christ reconciled the world to his Father, yet they were former in order, who were already near unto God, and of his family. Therefore, that was the most lawful order, that the apostles should gather the Church first of the Jews, afterward of the Gentiles, as we saw in the first chapter, (Acts i. 18,) and in other places, so that the fellowship of the Gentiles did not take from the Jews the right of the first-begotten, but that they were always the chief in the Church of God. In this respect Paul saith, that the righteousness of God is made manifest in the gospel, first to the Jews, then to the Grecians, (Rom. i. 16.) Such greatness of grace which God vouchsafed to bestow upon them, doth exaggerate and increase the greatness of their sin, whilst that they reject that which is so mercifully offered unto them. Therefore he addeth that they give judgment of themselves, *that they are unworthy of eternal life.* For seeing that the rejecting of the gospel is the denial of the righteousness of God, we need no other judge to condemn the unbelievers.

And after that ye reject. Paul seemeth to reason unfitly. For, first, it was not of necessity that the Jews should be

excluded, that the Gentiles might be admitted unto the hope of salvation: secondly, this was more convenient, that, after the Jews had embraced the gospel, they should grant the second place to the Gentiles. And Paul speaketh in like sort as if they could not grow together into one body, and as if the gospel could not come unto the Gentiles unless it were rejected of the Jews. And now was he not ordained to be the apostle of the Gentiles before he found such stubbornness in the Jews?[1] I answer, that there is great force in the words *we are turned*. For his meaning is, that he is now turned away from the Jews, that he may addict and give over himself wholly to the Gentiles. If they had remained in their degree such turning had not followed, but he should have drawn the Gentiles also with a continual course, after that the Jews were received into the bosom; and he should have embraced them both together. Now, forasmuch as the Jews turn their backs, and withdraw themselves from his ministry, he cannot look upon them and the Gentiles both at once. Therefore, taking his leave of them, he is enforced to translate his care unto the Gentiles. Therefore, unless the Jews had estranged themselves from the Church, the calling of the Gentiles should have been such as is by the prophets described: "In that day shall seven strangers take hold of the cloak of a man that is a Jew, and shall say, we will walk with you; because God is with you." But now the Gentiles are called after a new and accidental manner; because, when the Jews were rejected, they entered into the empty possession. They ought to have been gathered unto the Jews; but after that they fell away, and were driven out, they came in their place. So that their death was the life of the Gentiles, and the natural branches being cut off, the wild olives were ingrafted into the holy root, until God do at length restore them also unto life,

[1] "Cur ergo nunc demum ad gentes se convertit, quasi earum vocatio ex electi populi infidelitate pendeat," why then does he now only turn to the Gentiles, as if their calling depended on the infidelity of the chosen people? omitted.

being ingrafted into their former root, that the Israel of God being gathered together from all quarters may be saved.

47. *As he hath commanded.* The place is taken out of Isaiah, where, notwithstanding, God doth rather speak unto his Son than unto the apostles. But we must note, that many things which the Scripture attributeth to Christ do appertain unto his ministers. I say many things; not all things: for there be certain titles proper to the person of Christ, wherewith to adorn the ministers were wicked sacrilege. Christ is called our Righteousness, because he was the only purging sacrifice,[1] and hath reconciled the Father to us by his death, and did rise again afterward, that, having overcome death, he might purchase for us eternal life. Therefore the whole substance of our salvation is in Christ's person; but inasmuch as he worketh by his ministers, by resigning to them his office, he doth also impart with [to] them his titles. Of this sort is the preaching of the gospel. He alone was appointed by the Father to be our teacher; but he hath put in his place pastors and doctors, who speak, as it were, out of his mouth. So that the authority remaineth wholly to him, and he is nevertheless heard in his ministers. Therefore Paul doth fitly apply unto himself the testimony of Isaiah, where he intreateth of the preaching of the gospel.

I have made thee a light. It should seem that he speaketh in that place of such a calling of the Gentiles as doth not carry with it the casting off of the old people. For God doth rather associate strangers unto the Jews, who were before of the household. It is but a small matter, saith he, that thou be my minister in teaching Israel, because I have made thee a light to the Gentiles. God doth seem to begin his Church among the children of Abraham, and, that done, to reach out his hand to the Gentiles, that they may both make one Church by one consent of faith. But Paul doth

[1] "Victima expiatrix," expiatory victim.

in such sort cite the prophecy, as if it could not be fulfilled unless the Jews had been cast off. For he signifieth that the light of Christ was lighted to the Gentiles, after that they were cast into the darkness of death. I answer, that this cannot be necessarily proved out of the text, that Paul doth affirm that the Gentiles could not have been illuminated before the light of the Jews had been put out. For this may be the sense, Forasmuch as you have deprived yourselves of eternal life, there is no cause why ye should think that the grace of God is profaned, if, leaving you, we take care and charge of the Gentiles; for the Messiah is not given to you alone, but he is appointed to be the Saviour of the whole world; as it is written, "I have made thee," &c.; although, if you weigh the place of the prophet more thoroughly, you shall find the casting off of the old people included therein. For God pronounceth that he will be glorious and renowned in the ministry of Christ, though Israel be not gathered together. He addeth afterward, by way of exposition, that the power of Christ shall not be restrained unto one people only, because his light shall shed abroad his beams unto the farthest parts of the world unto salvation. It seemeth that Paul noteth this occasion of calling the Gentiles, namely, because, seeing he found no matter to exercise himself in among the Jews, he gave himself wholly to the Gentiles. We must note this by the way, in the words of the prophet, that salvation is put after light, according to that saying of Christ, "This is eternal life, to know thee, the true God," &c. (John xvii. 3.) For if the knowledge of God alone bring to us salvation, it is likewise the only resurrection from destruction of eternal death, for us to be illuminated into the faith of Christ, after that we be delivered from the darkness of ignorance.

48. *And when the Gentiles heard.* The matter of the Gentiles' joy was this, [viz.] when they heard that they were not called to salvation at a sudden, as if this had not been decreed before by God, but that that is now at length fulfilled which was foretold many years before. For doubtless it was

no small confirmation of their faith, because salvation was promised to them by the coming of Christ, whereby it did also come to pass that they did with more earnest desire and reverence embrace the gospel. To *glorify* the word of God may be expounded two manner of ways, either that they did confess that it was true which was prophesied by Isaiah, or that they embraced the doctrine which was set before them with faith. Assuredly there is a full subscription noted out, because they dispute or doubt no longer, so soon as they saw that Paul had gotten the victory. And surely we do then honour the word of God as we ought, when we submit ourselves obediently to it by faith; as it cannot be more grievously blasphemed than when men refuse to believe it. And here we see how the Gentiles were not hindered, by that stubbornness which they saw in the Jews, from giving their name to Christ. With like courage[1] must we despise and tread under foot the pride of the wicked, when, by their obstinacy, they study to stop the way before us.

And they believed. This is an exposition of the member next going before, at least in my judgment. For Luke showeth what manner [of] glory they gave to the word of God. And here we must note the restraint, [reservation,] when he saith that they believed, (but) not all in general, but those who were ordained unto life. And we need not doubt but that Luke calleth those τεταγμενους, who were chosen by the free adoption of God. For it is a ridiculous cavil to refer this unto the affection of those which believed, as if those received the gospel whose minds were well-disposed. For this ordaining must be understood of the eternal counsel of God alone. Neither doth Luke say that they were ordained unto faith, but unto life; because the Lord doth predestinate his unto the inheritance of eternal life. And this place teacheth that faith dependeth upon God's election. And assuredly, seeing that the whole race of mankind is blind and stubborn, those diseases stick fast in our nature until

[1] "Animi magnitudine," magnanimity.

they be redressed by the grace of the Spirit, and that redressing floweth from the fountain of election alone. For in that of two which hear the same doctrine together,[1] the one showeth himself apt to be taught, the other continueth in his obstinacy. It is not, therefore, because they differ by nature, but because God doth lighten [illumine] the former, and doth not vouchsafe the other the like grace. We are, indeed, made the children of God by faith; as faith, as touching us, is the gate and the first beginning of salvation; but there is a higher respect of God. For he doth not begin to choose us after that we believe; but he sealeth his adoption, which was hidden in our hearts, by the gift of faith, that it may be manifest and sure. For if this be proper to the children of God alone to be his disciples, it followeth that it doth not appertain unto all the children of Adam in general. No marvel, therefore, if all do not receive the gospel;[2] because, though our heavenly Father inviteth all men unto the faith by the external voice of man, yet doth he not call effectually by his Spirit any save those whom he hath determined to save. Now, if God's election, whereby he ordaineth us unto life, be the cause of faith and salvation, there remaineth nothing for worthiness or merits.

Therefore, let us hold and mark that which Luke saith, that those were ordained before unto life, who, being ingrafted into the body of Christ by faith, do receive the earnest and pledge of their adoption in Christ. Whence we do also gather what force the preaching of the gospel hath of itself. For it doth not find faith in men, save only because God doth call those inwardly whom he hath chosen, and because he draweth those who were his own before unto Christ, (John vi. 37.) Also Luke teacheth in the same words, that it cannot be that any of the elect should perish. For he saith not that one or a few of the elect did believe, but so many as were elect. For though God's election[3] be unknown to us until we perceive it by faith, yet is it not doubtful or in suspense in his secret counsel; because he

[1] "Promiscue," indiscriminately.
[2] "Promiscue," indiscriminately.
[3] "Adoptio," adoption.

commendeth all those whom he counteth his to the safeguard and tuition of his Son, who will continue a faithful keeper even unto the end. Both members are necessary to be known. When election is placed above faith, there is no cause why men should challenge to themselves any thing in any part of their salvation. For if faith, wherein consisteth salvation, which is unto us a witness of the free adoption of God, which coupleth us to Christ, and maketh his life ours, whereby we possess God with his righteousness, and, finally, whereby we receive the grace of sanctification, be grounded without us in the eternal counsel of God; what good things so ever we have, we must needs acknowledge that we have received it of the grace of God, which doth prevent us of its own accord. Again, because many entangle themselves in doubtful and thorny imaginations, whilst that they seek for their salvation in the hidden counsel of God, let us learn that the election of God is therefore approved by faith, that our minds may be turned unto Christ, as unto the pledge of election, and that they may seek no other certainty save that which is revealed to us in the gospel; I say, let this seal suffice us, that "whosoever believeth in the only-begotten Son of God hath eternal life," (John iii. 36.)

49. *The word of the Lord was spread abroad.* Luke doth in this place declare the proceeding[1] of the gospel; wherein appeareth how true the parable of Christ is, when he saith that it is like to leaven, (Luke xiii. 21.) We heard before that there was great concourse of people, so that the seed of true doctrine was sown throughout the whole city. Luke saith now that it was spread farther, to wit, throughout the whole country.

50. Nevertheless, he declareth that that was done not without great pains and trouble. Therefore, the beginning of the calling of the Gentiles was joyful and prosperous, neither could Satan hinder the course of the grace of God;

[1] "Progressum," the progress.

but in the mean season, it stood Paul and Barnabas upon (whom God had brought forth into the field[1]) to strive. And we must mark what Luke saith, that the religious and honest women, together with the chief men of the city, were enforced to persecute the servants of Christ. For this was no small offence to the rude, and those who were as yet scarce begotten in Christ, when they saw all those men and women which were of any account or estimation set against Christ, and also whatsoever was praise-worthy according to men. A great multitude of men received Christ, but it was but the multitude and the offscourings of men. Against them were set the chief men of the city, who with their pomp did easily oppress the base and obscure multitude. That might also cause doctrine to be suspected, yea, to be hated, in that godly and honest matrons to look to were enemies to it. If wicked, ungodly, and mischievous men should have issued out of their taverns and dens; if companies of whores should break out of their brothel-house, it should be no reproach to the gospel; yea, rather the dignity thereof should thereby appear more plainly; but now, what may the weak think with themselves, but that the doctrine which hath such adversaries is not of God? Therefore it was expedient that not only the faithful, who were as yet weak, should be confirmed by the Lord, lest their faith should fail, but also that the hand should be reached out to Paul and Barnabas, lest, being discouraged, they should leave off.

And by this example the Lord meant to teach us that we must valiantly resist such lets;[2] and that we must beware lest the vain visors of virtue[3] do blind our eyes, so that we cannot see the glory of Christ which shineth in the gospel. For it is certain that all that virtue and honesty which is in men is mere hypocrisy where they set themselves against Christ; though it may be that those who are rashly carried against Christ for a time may afterwards repent. Notwith-

[1] "Athletas in arenam," as wrestlers into the arena. [2] "Offendiculos," petty scandals. [3] "Inanes virtutum larvæ," empty masks or shows of virtue.

standing, we must thus think with ourselves, that whatsoever fair show of holiness those bear who resist the gospel, they are neither endued with the perfect fear of God, neither are they any thing else but a vain shadow, how greatly soever they boast of their virtue. Neither is it without cause that Christ hath this title given him, that he revealeth the cogitations of many hearts, (Luke ii. 35.)

Religious. And what manner [of] religion could that be where there was no reverence of the Word of God? We must note that there be four kinds of men: as there be few which worship God sincerely and from the heart, so there be few who openly profess the manifest and gross contempt of him. These be two sorts. And the more part is neither quite without religion, neither is it altogether void of the common worship of God; but yet, notwithstanding, whilst they do coldly, and, as it were, overfields[1] play with God, if they be thoroughly examined they be but profane; like as, at this day, the ungodliness of many is after a sort shrouded under ceremonies, and the feigned profession of the worship of God. So that in all ages there have been certain worshippers of God who have worshiped him like stage-players,[2] whose holiness did wholly consist in gestures and vain pomps. In Paul's time, even as at this day, a peculiar study of godliness was to be found in a few, whose religion, though it were impure, and their heart feigned, deceitful, and double, yet are they counted after a sort religious, in respect of their zeal. But hereby appeareth what account we may make of bare religion, which driveth headlong, through unadvised heat, the professors thereof, to resist the kingdom of God, and to oppress his glory. Furthermore, it is to be thought that though these matrons had not altogether given their name to Judaism, neither had they been nousled[3] in the doctrine of the law, yet were they half Jewesses, and that was the cause that they did so willingly take upon them the defence of the nation. For thus are women led about captive, being laden with sins, as Paul witnesseth.

[1] "Defunctorie," in a perfunctory manner. [2] "Histrionici Dei cultores," histrionic worshippers of God. [3] "Imbutæ," imbued with.

51. *When they had shaken off the dust of their feet.* We may also gather, even by the commandment of Christ, (Matth. x. 14; Luke ix. 5; x. 11,) that this was a token of cursing among the Jews. For it is not to be thought that Christ meant to have his [disciples] use an unknown sign, forasmuch as it was his purpose to terrify the gross and professed contemners of his doctrine. Furthermore, he meant by this means to declare that God doth so detest the wicked, that we must take great heed that we have no fellowship with them, lest we be infected with their uncleanness. All the wicked are said, indeed, to pollute the ground whereon they tread; but the Lord did never command that any, save only the contemners of his word, should be so rejected with such execration. If any adulterer or whoremonger, if any perjured person, if any drunkard,[1] were to be excommunicate, this sign was not used. Therefore, it appeareth how intolerable the contempt of the word of God is in his sight; because, when as he commandeth that the dust of the feet be shaken off, it is as much as if he should pronounce that they are the bond-slaves of Satan, men past hope, and worthy to be banished[2] from off the earth. Wherefore, let this so great severity teach us to reverence the gospel. Also the ministers of the word are taught with how great ferventness of zeal they must maintain the majesty of the word, that they do not coldly dissemble and wink at the contempt thereof.

52. *The disciples were filled with joy.* This member may be expounded two manner of ways; That they were filled with joy and the Spirit, by *hypallage*, thus, With joy of the Spirit, or (which is all one) with spiritual joy; because there is no quietness, peace, or joy of conscience, but it cometh of the Spirit of God, in which respect Paul saith that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit, (Rom. xiv. 17;) or that the word *Spirit* may contain

[1] "Si quis homicida," if any murderer, omitted. [2] "Qui exterminentur," to be exterminated.

under it other virtues and gifts. Yet this pleaseth me better, that they were filled with joy; because the grace of the Holy Spirit reigned in them, which alone doth so make us glad, truly and perfectly, that we are carried up above the whole world. For we must mark Luke's drift, that the faithful were so far from being troubled and shaken with those stumbling-blocks, how great soever they were, with the reproach of their teachers, with the disquieting of the city, with terrors and threatenings, also with fear and dangers hanging over their heads, that they did with the loftiness of their faith despise valiantly the gorgeousness, as well of their feigned holiness as of their power. And assuredly, if our faith shall be well grounded in God, and shall be thoroughly rooted in his word; and, finally, if it shall be well fortified with the aid of the Spirit as it ought, it shall nourish peace and joy spiritual in our minds, though all the world be in an uproar.

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK OF THE COMMENTARY UPON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

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